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SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

SOME TIME PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

MEMOIRS AND CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR:

AND

TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

BY THE REV. DRS. GIBBONS AND FINLEY.

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LIFE AND IMMORTALITY REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

2 TIM. I. 10. *And hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.**

SO extensive have been the havock and devastation which death has made in the world for near six thousand years, ever since it was first introduced by the sin of man, that this earth is now become one vast grave-yard, or burying-place for her sons. The many generations that have followed upon each other, in so quick a succession from Adam to this day, are now in the mansions under ground. And there must we and all the present generation sleep ere long. Some make a short journey from the womb to the grave: they rise from nothing at the creative fiat of the Almighty, and take an immediate flight into the world of spirits, without an intermediate state of probation. Like a bird on the wing, they perch on our globe, rest a day, a month, or a year, and then fly off for some other regions. It is evident, these were not formed for the purposes of the present state, where they make so short a stay; and yet we are sure they are not made in vain by an all-wise Creator; and therefore we conclude they are young immortals, that immediately ripen in the world of spirits, and there enter upon scenes, for which it was worth their while coming into existence. Others spring up and bloom for a few years; but they fade away like a flower, and are cut down. Others arrive at the prime or meridian of human life; but in all their strength and gaiety, and amid their hurries and schemes, and promising prospects, they are surprised by the arrest of death,

* This Sermon was preached at the funeral of Mr. William Yuille, and is dated Sept. 1, 1756.

and laid stiff, senseless, and ghastly in the grave. A few creep into their beds of dust under the burden of old age and the gradual decays of nature. In short, the grave is *the place appointed for all living;* the general rendezvous of all the sons of Adam. There the prince and the beggar, the conqueror and the slave, the giant and the infant, the scheming politician and the simple peasant, the wise and the fool, Heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and christians, all lie equally low, and mingle their dust without distinction. There beauty in all its charms putrifies into stench and corruption, and feeds the vilest insects. There the sturdy arm of youth lies torpid and benumbed, unable to drive off the worms that crawl through their frame, and riot upon their marrow. There lie our ancestors, our neighbours, our friends, our relatives, with whom we once conversed, and who were united to our hearts by strong and endearing ties; and there lies our friend, the sprightly, vigorous youth, whose death is the occasion of this funeral solemnity. This earth is overspread with the ruins of the human frame: it is an huge carnage, a vast charnal-house, undermined and hollowed with the graves, the last mansions of mortals.

And shall these ruins of time and death never be repaired? Is this the final state of human nature? Are all these millions of creatures, that were so curiously formed, that could think, and will, and exercise the superior powers of reason, are they all utterly extinct, absorbed into the yawning gulf of annihilation, and never again to emerge into life and activity? If this be the case, the expostulation of the psalmist upon this supposition, seems unavoidable; *Lord, wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* Psalm lxxxix. 47. It was not worth while to come into being, if it must be resigned so soon. The powers of reason were thrown away upon us, they were given only for the low purposes of the present life.

But my text revives us with heavenly light to scatter this tremendous gloom. Jesus hath abolished death, overthrown its empire, and delivered its captives; and he *hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.*

Life and immortality here seem to refer both to the soul and the body, the two constituents of our person. As applied to the body, life and immortality signify, that though our bodies are dissolved at death, and return into their native elements, yet they shall be formed anew with vast improvements, and raised to an

immortal existence; so that they shall be as though death never had *had* any power over them; and thus death shall be abolished, annihilated, and all traces of the ruins it had made forever disappear, as though they had never been. It is in this sense chiefly that the word *Immortality* or *Incorruptibility*,* is made use of in my text. But then the resurrection of the body supposes the perpetual existence of the soul, for whose sake it is raised: therefore life and immortality, as referring to the soul, signify that it is immortal, in a strict and proper sense; that is, that it cannot die at all, or be dissolved like the body; but it lives in the agonies of the dying animal; it lives after the dissolution of the animal frame in a separate state; it lives at the resurrection to re-animate the new formed body; and it lives forever, like its mortal Parent, and shall never be dissolved nor annihilated. In this complex sense we may understand the immortality of which my text speaks.

Now it is to the gospel that we owe the clear discovery of immortality in both these senses. As for the resurrection of the dead, which confers a kind of immortality upon our mortal bodies, it is altogether the discovery of divine revelation. The light of nature could not so much as give a hint of it to the most sagacious philosophers in the heathen world. They did not hope for it as possible, much less believe it as certain. And when, among other important doctrines of pure revelation, it was first preached to them by St. Paul, their pride could not bear the mortification of being taught by a tent maker what all their studies had not been able to discover; and therefore rejected it with scorn, and ridiculed it as a new-fangled notion of the superstitious Jews. This seems to have been an entire secret to all nations (except the Jews) till the light of christianity dawned upon the world. They bade an eternal farewell to their bodies, when they dropped them in the grave. They never expected to meet them again in all the glorious improvements of an happy resurrection. But that divine revelation from whence we learn our religion, opens to us a brighter prospect; it strengthens our eyes to look forward through the glooms of death, and behold the many that sleep in the dust awaking; *some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* Dan. xii. 2. It assures us, *that the hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.*

* ἀφθαρσία.

John v. 28. Therefore, be it known unto thee, O Death, thou king of terrors, that though we cannot now resist thy power nor escape thy arrest, yet we do not surrender ourselves to thee as helpless, irredeemable prisoners. We shall yet burst thy bonds, and obtain the victory over thee. And when we commit the dust of our friends or our own to thee, O grave, know, it is a trust deposited in thy custody, to be faithfully kept till called for by Him who was once a prisoner in thy territories, but regained his liberty, and triumphed over thee, and put that song of victory into the mouths of all his followers, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

As for the immortality of the soul, christian philosophers find it no difficulty to establish it upon the plain principles of reason. Their arguments are such as these; and I think they are conclusive: That the soul is an immaterial substance, and therefore cannot perish by dissolution, like the body; that the soul is a substance distinct from the body, and therefore the dissolution of the body has no more tendency to destroy the soul, than the breaking of a cage to destroy the bird enclosed in it; that God has implanted in the soul the innate desire of immortality; and that as the tendencies of nature in other instances and in other creatures are not in vain, this innate desire is an indication that he intended it for an immortal duration; that, as God is the moral Governor of the rational world, there must be rewards and punishments, and therefore there must be a future state of retribution; for we see mankind are now under a promiscuous providence, and generally are not dealt with according to their works; and if there be a future state of retribution, the soul must live in a future state, otherwise it could not be the subject of rewards and punishments. These and the like topics of argument have been improved by the friends of immortality, to prove that important doctrine beyond all reasonable suspicion. And because these arguments from reason seem sufficient, some would conclude that we are not at all obliged to the christian revelation in this respect. But it should be considered, that those are not the arguments of the populace, the bulk of mankind, but of a few philosophic studious men. But as immortality is the prerogative of all mankind, of the ignorant and illiterate, as well as of the wise and learned, all mankind, of all ranks of understanding, are equally concerned in the doctrine of immortality; and therefore a common revelation was necessary, which would teach the ploughman and mechanic,

as well as the philosopher, that he was formed for an immortal existence, and consequently that it is his grand concern to fit himself for a happiness beyond the grave, as lasting as his nature. Now, it is the gospel alone that makes this important discovery plain and obvious to all. It must also be considered, that men may be able to demonstrate a truth when the hint is but once given, which they would never have discovered, nor perhaps suspected, without that hint. So, when *the gospel of Christ has brought immortality to light*, our christian philosophers may support it with arguments from reason ; but had they been destitute of this additional light, they would have been lost in perplexity and uncertainty, or at best have een advanced to no farther than plausible or probable conjectures. Persons may be assisted in their searches by the light of revelation ; but, being accustomed to it, they may mistake it for the light of their own reason ; or they may not be so honest and humble as to acknowledge the assistance they have received. The surest way to know what mere unassisted reason can do, is to inquire what it has actually done in those sages of the heathen world, who had no other guide, and in whom it was carried to the highest degree of improvement. Now we find, in fact, that though some philosophers had plausibilities and presumptions, that their souls should exist after the dissolution of their bodies, yet that they rather supposed, or wished, or thought it probable, than firmly believed it upon good evidence. The Socrateses, the Platos, and the Ciceros, of Greece and Rome, after all their searches, were more perplexed on this point, than a plain common christian of the smallest intellectual improvements in our land of evangelical light. Whoever reads their writings upon this subject, will find, when they draw their conclusion of the soul's existence after death, it is often from extravagant and chimerical premises ; such as the pre-existence of human souls, their successive transmigrations from body to body, their being literally particles of the Deity, whom they supposed to be the *Anima Mundi*, the universal soul of the world, &c. All these premises want the support of proper evidence ; and some of them are directly subversive of the proper notion of a future state, as a state of rewards and punishments. Sometimes indeed they seem to reason from better principles ; but then they still hesitate about the conclusion, and fluctuate between the presumptions for it, and the objections against it. Socrates was confessedly the brightest character in the heathen world, and seemed to

have the fairest claim of any among them to the honour of a martyr for the cause of truth and virtue ; and yet, even he, when making his defence before his judges, speaks in the language of uncertainty and perplexity. "Death," says he, "either reduces us to nothing, and entirely destroys all sense and consciousness ; or, as some say, it conveys us from this world into some other region." Thus, standing on the brink of eternity, he was not assured whether he was not about to leap into the hideous gulf of annihilation, or to pass into some vital region replete with inhabitants. When he was condemned, his last words to the court were these ; "It is time for us to part ; I, that I may suffer death ; and you, that you may enjoy life ; but which of us has the happier lot, is known only to God" Poor honest Socrates ! how happy hadst thou been hadst thou but enjoyed one glimmering of that heavenly light which multitudes among us despise ! My brethren, let us be thankful for our superior advantages, and let us prize and improve that precious gospel, which gives us full information in this important point, and renders the meanest christian wiser, in this respect, than Socrates himself.

My present design is not to propose arguments for the conviction of your judgments, which I hope you do not so much need ; but I shall give you some idea of immortality, in both the senses I have mentioned, and then improve it.

Let us first look through the wastes and glooms of death and the grave to the glorious dreadful morning of the resurrection. At the all-alarming clangour of the last trumpet, Adam, and the sleeping millions of his posterity, start into sudden life. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth ; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.* John v. 28.

Then, my brethren, your dust and mine shall be organized, and re-animated ; and *though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God.* Job xix. 26. *Then this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

And may not the prospect alarm us, and set us upon earnest preparation for these important scenes ? Shall we take so much care of our bodies in this mortal state, where, after all our care, they must soon fall to dust, and become the prey of worms, and

shall we take no care that they may have a happy and glorious resurrection! What does it signify how they are fed or dressed, while they are only fattening for worms, and the ornaments of dress may be our winding-sheet? What does this signify, in comparison with their doom at the great rising day, and their state through eternity? My brethren, you must not let *sin reign in your mortal bodies now, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof,* if you would have them raised holy and happy in that awful morning; but you must consecrate your bodies, and keep them holy as the temples of the Holy Ghost; and *yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Can you flatter yourselves that bodies polluted with filthy lusts and sensual gratifications shall ever be admitted into the regions of perfect purity? It would be an unnatural element to such depraved constitutions. Shall those feet ever walk the crystal pavement of the New Jerusalem, which have been accustomed to run into the foul paths of sin? Shall those tongues ever join the songs of heaven, which have been oftener employed in swearing and imprecation, the language of hell, than in prayer and praise? Shall those ears ever be charmed with celestial music, which have not listened with pleasure and eagerness to the joyful sound of the gospel, but were entertained with the song of drunkards, the loud unthinking laugh, and the impure jest? Are those knees likely to bow in delightful homage before the throne of God and the Lamb on high, which have not been used to the posture of petitioners at the throne of grace on earth? Are those members likely to be the instruments of an heavenly spirit, in the exercises of that blessed state, which have not been "instruments of righteousness unto holiness" in this state of trial and discipline? No, my brethren, this is not at all probable, even to a superficial inquirer; and to one that thinks deeply, and consults right reason and the sacred scriptures, this appears utterly impossible. Therefore take warning in time. Methinks this consideration might have some weight, even with epicures and sensualists, who consider themselves as mere animals, and make it their only concern to provide for and gratify the flesh. Unless you be religious now, unless you now deny yourselves of your guilty pleasures, not only your soul, that neglected, disregarded trifle, must perish; but your body, your dear body, your only care, must be wretched too; your body must be hungry, thirsty, pained, tortured, hideously deformed, a mere system of pain and loathsomeness. But if you now keep

your bodies pure, and serve God with them, and with your spirits too, they will bloom forever in the charms of celestial beauty; they will flourish in immortal youth and vigour! they will forever be the receptacles of the most exquisite sensations of pleasure. And will you not deny yourselves the sordid pleasures of a few years, for the sake of those of a blessed immortality?

But let me give you a view of immortality of a more noble kind, the proper immortality of the soul. And here, what an extensive and illustrious prospect opens before us! look a little way backward, and your sight is lost in the darkness of non-existence. A few years ago you were nothing. But at the creative fiat of the Almighty, that little spark of being, the soul, was struck out of nothing; and now it warms your breast, and animates the machine of flesh. But shall this glimmering spark, this *divinæ particula auræ*, ever be extinguished? No; it will survive the ruins of the universe, and blaze out into immortality: it will be coeval with the angels, the natives of heaven, and the *Indigenæ*, the original inhabitants of the world of spirits; nay with the great Father of spirits himself. The duration of your souls will run on from its first commencement, in parallel lines with the existence of the Deity. What an inheritance is this entailed upon the child of dust, the creature of yesterday! Here let us pause,—make a stand,—and take a survey of this majestic prospect! This body must soon moulder into dust, but the soul will live unhurt, untouched, amid all the dissolving struggles and convulsions of animal nature. *These heavens shall pass away with a great noise; these elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, and the things that are therein, shall be burnt up;* 2 Pet. iii. 10. but this soul shall live secure of existence in the universal desolation;

> "Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
> The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds." ADDISON.

And now, when the present system of things is dissolved, and time shall be no more, eternity, boundless eternity, succeeds; and on this the soul enters as on its proper hereditary duration. Now look forward as far as you will, your eyes meet with no obstruction, with nothing but the immensity of the prospect: in that, indeed, it is lost, as extending infinitely beyond its ken. Come, attempt this arithmetic of infinits, and exhaust the power of numbers: let millions of millions of ages begin the vast com-

putation; multiply these by the stars of heaven; by the particles of dust in this huge globe of earth; by the drops of water in all the vast oceans, rivers, lakes, and springs that are spread over the globe; by all the thoughts that have risen in so quick a succession in the minds of men and angels, from their first creation to this day; make this computation, and then look forward through this long line of duration, and contemplate your future selves: still you see yourselves in existence; still the same persons; still endowed with the same consciousness, and the same capacities for happiness or misery, but vastly enlarged; as much superior to the present as the capacities of an adult to those of a new-born infant, or an embryo in the womb. Still will you bloom in immortal youth, and are as far from an end as in the first moment of your existence. O Sirs, methinks it may startle us to view our future selves so changed, so improved, removed into such different regions, associated with such strange unacquainted beings, and fixed in such different circumstances of glory or terror, of happiness or misery.

Men of great projects and sanguine hopes are apt to sit and pause, and take an imaginary survey of what they will do, and what they will be in the progress of life. But then death, like an apparition, starts up before them, and threatens to cut them off in the midst of their pursuit. But here no death threatens to extinguish your being, or snap the thread of your existence; but it runs on in one continued everlasting tenor. What a vast inheritance is this, unalienably entailed upon every child of Adam! What importance, what value, does this consideration give to that neglected thing, the soul! What an awful being is it? Immortality! What emphasis, what grandeur in the sound! Immortality is so vast an attribute, that it adds a kind of infinity to any thing to which it is annexed, however insignificant in other respects: and on the other hand, the want of this would degrade the most exalted being into a trifle. The highest angel, if the creature of a day, or of a thousand years, what would he be? A fading flower, a vanishing vapour, a flying shadow. When his day or his thousand years are past, he is as truly nothing as if he had never been. It is little matter what becomes of him: let him stand or fall, let him be happy or miserable, it is just the same in a little time; he is gone, and there is no more of him; no traces of him left. But an immortal! a creature that shall never, never, never cease to be! that shall expand his capacities of action, of pleasure or

pain, through an everlasting duration ! what an awful, important being is this !—And is my soul, this little spark of reason in my breast, is that such a being? I tremble at myself. I revere my own dignity, and am struck with a kind of pleasing horror to view what I must be. And is there any thing so worthy of the care of such a being as the happiness, the everlasting happiness of my immortal part ? What is it to me, who am formed for an endless duration, what I enjoy, or what I must suffer in this vanishing state ? Seventy or eighty years bear not the least imaginable proportion to the duration of such a being ; they are too inconsiderable a point to be seen ; mere cyphers in the computation ! They do not bear as much proportion as the small dust that will not turn the balance, to this vast globe of earth, and all the vaster globes that roll in their orbits through the immense space of the universe.

And what shall become of me through this immortal duration ? This, and this only, is the grand concern of an immortal : and in comparison of it, it does not deserve one thought what will become of me while in this vanishing phantom of a world. For consider, your immortality will not be a state of insensibility, without pleasure or pain ; you will not draw out an useless inactive existence in an eternal stupor, or a dead sleep. But your souls will be active as long as they exist ; and as I have repeatedly observed, still retain all their capacities ; nay, their capacities will perpetually enlarge with an eternal growth, and forever tower from glory to glory in heaven, or plunge from depth to depth in hell. Here then, my fellow-immortals ! here pause and say to yourselves, " What is like to become of my soul through this long space, forever ? Is it likely to be happy or miserable ?" What though you are now rich, honourable, healthy, merry, and gay ? Alas ! terrestrial enjoyments are not proper food for an immortal soul ; and besides, they are not immortal, as your souls are. If these are your portion, what will you do for happiness millions of ages hence, when all these are fled away like a vapour ? Are you provided with a happiness which will last as long as your souls will live to crave it ? Have you an interest in God ? Are you prepared for the fruition of the heavenly state ? Do you delight in God above all ? Have you a relish for the refined pleasures of religion ? Is the supreme good the principal object of your desire ? Do you now accustom yourselves to the service of God, the great employment of heaven ? and are you preparing yourselves for the more

exalted devotion of the church on high, by a serious attendance on the humbler forms of worship in the church on earth? Are you made pure in heart and life, that you may be prepared for the regions of untainted holiness, to breathe in that pure salubrious air, and live in that climate, so warm with the love of God, and so near the Sun of righteousness? Do not some of you know that this is not your prevailing character? And what then do you think will become of you without a speedy alteration in your temper and conduct? Alas! must your immortality, the grand prerogative of your nature, become your eternal curse? Have you made it your interest that you should be a brute? that is, that you should perish entirely, and your whole being be extinguished in death? Then it is no wonder you strive to disbelieve the doctrine of a future state, and your own immortality. But alas! in vain is the strife. The principles of atheism and infidelity may lull your consciences into a stupid repose for a little while, but they cannot annihilate you. They may lead you to live like beasts, but they cannot enable you to die like beasts; no, you must live, live to suffer righteous punishment, whether you will or not. As you did not come into being by your own consent, so neither can you lay down your being when you please. And will you not labour to make your immortality a blessing? Is there any thing in this world that can be a temptation to you to forfeit such an immense blessing? O that you were wise! that you would consider this!

I shall now accommodate my subject to the present melancholy occasion, and endeavour to make a particular improvement of it.

Do you expect a character of our deceased friend? This is not my usual practice; and I omit it, not because I can see nothing amiable in mankind, nor because I would enviously deny them their just praises, but because I have things of much greater importance to engage your attention The dead have received their just and unchangeable doom at a superior tribunal; and our panegyrics or censures may be often misapplied. My business is with the living; not to flatter their vanity with compliments, but to awaken them to a sense of their own mortality, and to a preparation for it. However, if you must have a character, I will draw it to you in the most important and interesting light. Here was a youth in the bloom of life, in the prime of his strength, with a lively flow of spirits, who seemed as secure from the stroke of death as any of us; a youth that had escaped many dangers by

sea and land; a youth launched into the world with, no doubt, the usual projects and expectations of that sanguine age. But where is he now? In yonder grave, alas! lies the blooming, promising flower, withered in the morning of life. There lies the mortal body, mouldering into dust, and feeding the worms. Come to his grave, ye young and gay, ye lively and strong, ye men of business and hurry, come and learn what now may, and shortly must, be your doom. Thus shall your limbs stiffen, your blood stagnate, your faces wear the pale and ghastly aspect of death, and your whole frame dissolve into dust and ashes. Thus shall your purposes be broken off, your schemes vanish like smoke, and all your hopes from this world perish. Death perpetually lurks in ambush for you, ready every moment to spring upon his prey. 'O that Death!' (said a gentleman of a large estate, strong constitution, and cheerful temper) 'I do not love to think of that Death; he comes in and spoils all' So he does indeed; he spoils all your thoughtless mirth, your idle amusements, and your great schemes. Methinks it becomes you to prepare for what you cannot avoid. Methinks, among your many schemes and projects, you should form one to be religious. You may make a poor shift to live without religion, but you can make none to die without it. You may ridicule the saint, but he really has the advantage of you. 'Well, after all,' said a celebrated unbeliever, 'these christians are the happiest people upon earth.' Indeed they are; and if you are wise, you will labour to be of their number.

But was our departed friend nothing but an animal, a mere machine of flesh? Is the whole of him putrifying in yonder grave? No; I must draw his character farther. He was an immortal; and no sooner did he resign his breath, than his soul took wing, and made its flight into the regions of spirits. There it now dwells. And what amazing scenes now present themselves to his view? what strange, unknown beings does he now converse with? There also, my brethren, you and I must ere long be. We too must be initiated into those grand mysteries of the invisible world, and mingle in this assembly of strangers. We must share with angels in their bliss and glory, or with devils in their agonies and terrors. And our eternal doom shall be according to our present character, and the improvement we make of our opportunities for preparation.

And do you, Sirs, make it your main concern to secure an happy immortality? Do you live as expectants of eternity? Or do

you live as though this world were to be your eternal residence, and as if your bodies, not your souls, were immortal? Does your conscience approve of such conduct? Do you really think it is better for you, upon the whole, to commence fashionably wicked, or perhaps ringleaders in debauchery and infidelity, in a country overrun with all manner of vice? Is this better than to retain the good impressions you might perhaps receive in youth, and to act upon the model built for you in a religious education? Which do you think you will approve of in the hour of death, that honest hour, when things begin to appear in a true light? And of which, think ye, will you be able to give the most comfortable account at the supreme tribunal? Brethren, form an impartial judgment upon this comparison, and let it guide your conduct. Behave as *strangers and pilgrims on earth, that have here no continuing city*; behave as expectants of eternity, as candidates for immortality; as *beholding him that is invisible, and looking for a city which has foundations, eternal in the heavens.* In that celestial city may we all meet at last, through Jesus Christ. Amen!

Sermon 28.

JESUS CHRIST THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 16, 17. *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.**

THE context, like many other passages of the prophetical scriptures, seems to have a double sense. The primary sense may be thus represented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like *a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing*, and bearing all before it. (ver. 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of these approaching judgments; but they still continued secure and impenitent, and unapprehensive of danger. They flattered themselves they had ar-

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, Feb. 13, 1757.

tifice enough to keep themselves safe. They thought themselves impregnably intrenched and fortified in their riches, their strong holds, and the sanctity of their temple and nation. They might also think their arts of negociation would secure them from the invasion of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Assyrians, to whom they were most exposed. These were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falsehood under which they hid themselves. These, they imagined, like moles or ditches, who keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them ; and they were as secure as if they had made *a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave*, not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, *We have made a covenant with death ; and with hell are we at agreement : when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us ; for we have made lies* (that is, what the prophet calls lies) *our refuge ;* and under what he calls falsehood have we hid ourselves. (ver. 15.) It is in this connection my text is introduced ; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted ; as if he had said, " Since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another," *Therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation ;* that is, " My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up, as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation shall stand unshaken amidst all the storms and tempests of national calamity, that may beat upon our guilty land." *He that believeth shall not make haste* ; that is, " he that trusts in this refuge, shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like persons surprised with unexpected danger, fly in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw himself into destruction, by his ill-advised, precipitant attempts to keep out of it ; but he shall be calm and serene, and have presence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance." Or the meaning may be, " He that believeth shall not make such haste to be delivered, as to fly to unlawful means for that purpose ; but will patiently wait God's time to deliver him in a lawful way." The

prophet proceeds, *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;* that is, "God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tempests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity! *the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.* And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: *when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall they be trodden down by it.* (ver. 18.)

This seems to be a primary sense of the context; and thus, it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. In this view it is very applicable to us, in the present state of our country and nation, when the enemy is likely to break in like a flood upon us. But I must add, that it is very likely, that even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words, when they are applied to any other; and the connection will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus, "Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold I will provide one that will effectually secure all that fly to it from all the judgments to which they were exposed." *I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone,* &c. "I send my Son into the world, as an Almighty Saviour; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them."

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate, principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. St. Peter quotes this passage according to the LXX, with some improvements, and applies it expressly to Christ. *To whom coming,* says he, *as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confound-*

ed. 1 Peter ii 4, 6. Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose :—The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious, and sure foundation, laid in Zion ; that is, in the church, for the sons of men to build their hopes upon His church thus built on him, is compared to a stately, regular, and impregnable temple, consecrated to the service of God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices ; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immoveable through all eternity, for its foundation is sure.

But alas ! though Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though they reject this sure foundation. They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

But lo ! the wrath of God will at last beat upon a guilty world, like a storm of hail, or break in upon it like an overwhelming torrent ; then every soul that is not built upon this rock must be swept away, and all the other refuges and hiding-places shall be laid in ruins forever.

The great God will also strictly inquire who is founded upon this rock, and who not. He will critically try the temple of his church, like a workman, with line and plummet ; he will discover all irregularities and useless appendages. And in consequence of this examination, the storms and torrents of divine indignation shall sweep away and overwhelm all that are not built upon this foundation, and that are not compacted into this building.

These remarks contain the general meaning of our text ; but it is necessary I should be more particular.

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such, that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must endure long, for our souls will exist forever ; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement forever. The fabric must rise high, for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge ; and a low happiness of a vulgar size will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it ; for many are the storms that will rise upon us,

upon our country, and upon this guilty world in general. Losses, bereavements, sicknesses, and a thousand calamities that I cannot name, may yet try us. The enemy is now breaking in like a flood upon our country, and we and our earthly all are in danger of being overwhelmed. Death will certainly attack us all; and that must be a strong building indeed which the king of terrors will not be able to demolish.—Besides, when all the purposes of divine love in our world shall be accomplished, an almighty tempest of divine indignation shall break upon it, and sweep away all that it contains; and blend cities, kingdoms, plains and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to shift the metaphor according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance, which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into an universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulf of remediless destruction. We, my brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds? What can support the fabric when this vast machine of nature, formed with so much skill and strength by the hands of a divine Architect, shall be broken up and fall to pieces? Now is the time for us to look out; it will be too late when all created supports are swept away, and this solid globe itself is dissolved beneath our feet into a sea of fire. Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? whither will you turn? This earth, and all its riches, honours and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all; therefore bethink yourselves once more; where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day!

If you are anxious and perplexed, I need only point you to my text for relief. *Behold*, says the Lord God, *behold I lay in Zion for*

a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Let me expatiate a little upon the properties of this foundation.

1. It is a stone; a stone for solidity, stability and durableness. 'Every thing else,' says the charming Hervey,* 'is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusory dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness.' And, blessed be God! he is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? so is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hopes on him, and render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm, immoveable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal all upon this rock; it will stand forever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? so is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength, and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth forever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can never moulder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay: the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves: a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel, and Abraham, as the first moment they ventured their dependence upon it; a foundation that will remain

* Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. p. 361, &c.

the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely,

2. *A tried stone.* 'Tried,' says the same fine writer, 'in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny.' His obedience was tried; and it appeared upon trial that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried, by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will was tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men—to sinners—to enemies, was tried: tried to the uttermost: it was put to the trial whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him; whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried under the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions; and to *save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him.* Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manassah and Paul, that had been bloody persecutors, Mary Magdalen, that had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more that were sinners of the most atrocious characters, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them. This stone is the foundation of that living temple, the church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this sup-

ports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it ; for it appears sufficient to bear them all.

But I must farther observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of *a tried stone*, it may be rendered, ' a stone of trial ;' or, ' a trying stone ;' that is, this is the true touch-stone of men's characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven ; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Saviour, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole law and gospel ; it is the grand capital precept ; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of Heaven towards the sons of men. And therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience ; and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely in falling in with this command, they will obey him in every thing ; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornness, &c. be thoroughly subdued. If a man is once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling, mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shews that divine grace has got an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in any thing. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation ; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cross of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touch-stone has discovered many glittering virtues to

be but dross. The pharisees and scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them ; and then it appeared what they were ; then it appeared they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone, and would not build upon it. They rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. Nay, instead of making him the foundation of their hopes, they made him *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8. and they stumbled and fell into destruction. *Christ crucified*, says the apostle, *is to the Jews a stumbling block*. 1 Cor. i. 23. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue ; they gloried in it themselves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touchstone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. You will find some who have an amiable, ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, just, charitable, and shine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion ; they are frequent in prayer, and strict attendants upon all the solemnities of divine worship : all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no sufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance ; nay, that they must renounce all this in point of dependance, as having no merit at all ; and that they must, as helpless, guilty, self-condemned sinners place their trust only in Jesus Christ ; and they then begin to shew their pride : then their hearts rise against this mortifying doctrine, and perhaps against him that inculcates it. They cannot bear that all their imaginary merit should have such contempt cast upon it. They will own indeed, as others around them do, that Christ is the only Saviour ; but their real dependance is at bottom upon some supposed goodness in themselves. And thus they discover that all their righteousness is but the proud self-righteousness of a Pharisee, or the self-confident virtue of a stoic philosopher, and

not the humble religion or genuine sterling virtue of a true christian. Thus the reception which men give to Jesus Christ is the grand criterion of their character. And this is agreeable to the prophecy of good old Simeon concerning him : *Behold this child*, says he, *is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against* ;—*that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* Luke ii. 34, 35. The secret thoughts, reasonings,* and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a trying stone with regard to men's present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. All that are built upon this foundation, however frail and tottering in themselves, shall grow up into a glorious impregnable temple, and stand firm when the frame of nature is dissolved. But all that are not built upon this foundation, however strong or well established in their own conceit, or however high they raise the fabric of their hopes, shall be demolished and laid in ruins forever. The one *may be likened*, says Christ, *unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not ; for it was founded upon a rock.* And the other may be *likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand* ; *and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell ; and great was the fall of it.* Matt. vii. 24, 27. What a confounding fall will this be to those that have built a towering Babel of hopes that reaches to heaven ! But,

3. This is a precious stone. ' More precious than rubies (to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey,) the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations. Precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects greater than Jonah ; wiser than Solomon ; fairer than the children of men ; chiefest among ten thousand ; and, to the awakened sinner, or enlightened believer, altogether lovely.'

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the sum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellency, divine and human, created and uncreated, centre in

* διαλογισμοὶ.

him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased;* his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain*, is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. *To you therefore that believe he is precious*, says St. Peter. 1 Peter ii. 7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness to the guilty self-condemned soul! how precious is his sanctifying grace to the soul heavy laden with sin, and groaning under that body of death! how precious the assistance of his almighty arm to his poor soldiers in the spiritual warfare! how precious the light of his instructions to the benighted wandering mind; how sweet the words of his mouth; sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. How precious the light of his smiling countenance, and the sensations of his love to the desponding, sinking-soul! how precious that eternal salvation which he imparts! and how precious the price he paid for it! *not corruptible things, such as silver and gold*, says St. Peter, *but his own precious blood.* 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In short, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. O that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to his friends, *Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?* I enlarge upon this article with the mere pleasure, as I doubt not but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with the request of one my friends,* at the distance of near four thousand miles, who writes to me thus :—'Dear Sir, recommend Him to poor sinners, recommend him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Saviour and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. O that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him with ravishment and wonder'.—These are British sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. O! that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. 'Such (says Mr. Hervey) as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal to every weight;

* Mr. Benjamin Forfitt, of London.

even to sin, the heaviest load in the world.—The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail those humble penitents who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer ; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes upon this immoveable basis.' The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. *Behold*, says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.* It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I have already touched upon. Indeed his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colours of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

The author whom I have repeatedly quoted, thinks the words may be otherwise rendered : ' A foundation ! a foundation !' There is, says he, a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence thus understood : it speaks the language of agreeable surprise and exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want ; that which multitudes seek, and find not ; it is here ! it is here ! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.'

5. This is a corner-stone. ' It not only,' says Mr. Hervey, ' sustains, but unites the edifice : incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love ; hereafter, in one common participation of eternal joy.' To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle : *He is our peace who hath made both* ; that is, both Jews and Gentiles, *one*, one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord ; in whom you* [Gentiles] *also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Ephes. ii. 14. 20, 22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America ; but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this corner-stone ; all harmoniously compacted* into one regular, magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

* So the original word, συναρμολογουμένη.

Jesus Christ may also be called a corner-stone, to signify his peculiar importance in this spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the chief-corner-stone, and the head of the corner. Matt. xxi. 42. Psalm cxviii. 22. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. 1 Peter ii. 7. Ephes. ii. 20. We are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, in a subordinate sense; but *Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone*. He has the most important place in the building. It is he that holds up and connects all. Apostles, prophets, and all are but sinking sand without him. Their righteousness, their strength are nothing without him. On him all their doctrines depend, in him they all terminate, and from him they derive all their efficacy. Take away this corner-stone, and immediately the saints in heaven fall from their thrones; and the saints upon earth, that are gradually rising heavenward, sink forever. Take away this corner-stone, and this glorious living temple that has been building for so many ages, breaks to pieces, and covers heaven and earth with its ruins.

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general property of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text, "It is laid in Zion as a foundation:" It is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. *No other foundation*, says St. Paul, *can any man lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ.* And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favour at least for our own sakes, this is to lay a foundation of stone upon a quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, it must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the christian world. They all own Christ is the only Saviour; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation; and Christ's righteous-

ness is rather a part of the superstructure, than the entire foundation. This is *the refuge of lies*, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great deal of pains, and, when they think themselves provided with a strong everlasting mansion, suddenly they feel themselves swept away into destruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

Here, brethren, let us pause a while, and turn our attention to a question that I hope you have anticipated. "Am I a living stone built upon this foundation? Are all my hopes of acceptance with God and eternal happiness founded upon this rock?" Are you not desirous to make this important discovery? To make it now while you have time? If you have made a mistake, to correct it, by pulling down the old building, and beginning a new one on the right foundation? Have you no anxiety about this? If not, I must tell you, you care not for the God that made you, or the Saviour that bought you with his blood: heaven and hell are but trifles to you, and you are indifferent which should be your eternal lot. You have not the sensibility of a man, with regard to pleasure and pain, but the stupidity of a brute, or rather of a senseless stone. And if you continue thus stupidly careless about eternal things, you shall forever be cut off from the rewards of pious diligence, and feel the dreadful doom of the slothful servant. Brethren, can you be indifferent in a matter of such infinite consequence? Let me remind you, that a dreadful hurricane is gathering over this guilty world, which will burst upon you, and sweep you away, unless you be founded upon the rock of ages. Think of the last part of my text; *the hail shall sweep away the refuge, or hope of lies, the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* You may be parts of the outward court of this spiritual building; I mean, you may be members of the visible church; but that is only a scaffold to the sacred temple, and when this is finished, that shall be pulled down. Remember this building will be critically inspected: the great Architect *will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;* and if you do not stand that test, you will be demolished, as useless appendages or incumbrances, and you never can be built up again; the temple of God will then be complete, and no new stones shall be added to it forever. Therefore now is the time to discover fundamental errors, and correct them. Discover them you can and will in the eternal world: but O! it will then be too late to correct them!

Would you then know whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build any where else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? Have you seen that honours, riches, pleasures, and all the world, were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length with Peter, to turn to Christ, and cry out, *help, Lord, I perish?* Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependence upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability, of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. O! how precious did this stone appear to you! like the loadstone, it had a strong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need go no farther than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have said of the preciousness of Christ; the preciousness of his strength, his righteousness, and every thing in him. *To you that believe he is precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7. This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers, without exception. And shall I conclude this is the real sentiment of this assembly concerning Christ? Shall I conclude it, brethren? O shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that Christ is precious to you? Alas! is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual dependence? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Or is it upon something else? Do you not feel the need of strength, of spiritual life, of pardon and righteousness, and eternal life? Certainly, if you know yourselves, you feel the need of these things. And upon whom do you depend for them? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Is it habitual, and, as it were, natural to you, since you first ventured upon this foundation, to rest there, sensible that you have always need of this support, and that every other foundation is but sinking sand? Brethren, what does conscience reply to these questions?

4. Have you been formed into proper stones for this spiritual temple? Has God hewn you, may I so speak, by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building? Has he shaped and polished your souls for a place in it? Do you feel this divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, polishing you more and more into a resemblance to Christ? Or are you still the same rough, irregular, unpolished pieces, with human nature unsanctified in its present degenerate state? Then you may be sure you are not built upon this foundation.

I think I may pronounce these few queries fully decisive in this case. And what discoveries do they now make among you? Where now appears to be the foundation of your hope? Have not some of you rejected the chief corner stone which God has appointed, and built upon a quicksand? If so, even a friendly tongue cannot but denounce some terrible things to you.

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must unavoidably, sink forever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. *The same Lord of hosts who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, for a gin and a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and snared, and taken.* Isa. viii. 14. *Unto you that believe,* says St. Peter, *he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word.* 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you and crush you

in pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, *Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken;* that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, *but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder;* that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more terrible manner. And will not all these alarming considerations have weight with you, to persuade you to make him your only foundation?

If you have already made him so, then be assured you are safe and immovable forever. Let storms of private or public calamity rise and beat upon you; let your fears and doubts rise to ever so high a deluge; let temptations make ever so severe attacks upon you, still the foundation on which you stand abides firm and unshaken. Nay, let all nature go to wreck, and seas and land, and heaven and earth be blended together, still this foundation stands firm, and the living temple built upon it will remain immoveable forever. You that believe need not make haste, you need not be struck into consternation upon the appearance of danger, nor fly to unlawful means of deliverance; your all is safe, and therefore you may be serene and calm. Is the burden of guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden, cast it upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come ye, that are weary and heavy laden, come, and build your hopes, and place your rest here. O! what joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

What now remains, but that I should more explicitly point out this precious stone to you all, by illustrating the emphatical word *behold*, prefixt to the text.

Behold, ye poor sinking souls, behold with wonder and gratitude: here is a sure foundation for you: cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, "Alas! I must sink forever under this mountain of guilt;" but turn to Jesus, with sinking Peter, and cry, *Help, Lord, I perish;* and he will bear you up. Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

Behold, ye joyful believers. See here the foundation of all your joys and hopes. Do you stand firm like Mount Zion? See, here is the rock that supports you. Gratefully acknowledge it,

and inscribe this precious stone with your praises. Point it out to others as the only ground of hope for perishing souls.

Behold, ye wretched self-righteous Pharisees, the only rock on which you must build if you expect to stand. Your proud self-confident virtue, your boasted philosophic morality, is but a loose, tottering foundation. Virtue and morality are necessary to complete and adorn the superstructure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all, they will prove but a quicksand.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish! perish you must if you set at nought this precious stone. To you this only foundation is like to prove a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.* To you the nature of things is inverted; the only ground of hope will heighten your despair; and the Saviour of men will be your destroyer.

Behold, ye glorious angels, behold the firm foundation divine love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with Jesus too who is your head; and our connection with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore join with us in celebrating the praises of this foundation. This precious stone appears to you in all its splendours: its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep under ground, that supports us though we see it not. When shall we be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it will appear full to our view, and be the object of our delightful contemplation forever and ever!

Sermon 29.

THE NECESSITY AND EXCELLENCE OF FAMILY-RELIGION.

1 TIM. v. 8. *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

THE great Author of our nature, who has made us sociable creatures, has instituted various societies among mankind, both civil and religious, and joined them together by the various bonds of relation. The first and radical society is that of a family;

which is the nursery of the church and state. This was the society instituted in Paradise in the state of innocence, when the indulgent Creator, finding that it was not good for man, a sociable creature, to be alone, formed an help meet for him, and united them in the endearing bonds of the conjugal relation. From thence the human race was propagated ; and when multiplied, it was formed into civil governments and ecclesiastical assemblies. Without these associations the worship of God could not be publicly and socially performed, and liberty and property could not be secured. Without these, men would turn savages and roam at large, destitute of religion, insensible of the human passions, and regardless of each other's welfare. Civil and religious societies are therefore wisely continued in the world, and we enjoy the numerous advantages of them. But these do not exclude, but presuppose domestic societies, which are the materials of which they are composed ; and as churches and kingdoms are formed out of families, they will be such as the materials of which they consist. It is therefore of the greatest importance to religion and civil society that families be under proper regulations, that they may produce proper plants for church and state, and especially for the eternal world, in which all the temporary associations of mortals in this world finally terminate, and to which they ultimately refer.

Now in families, as well as in all governments, there are superiors and inferiors ; and as it is the place of the latter to obey, so it belongs to the former both to rule and to provide. The heads of families are obliged not only to exercise their authority over their dependents, but also to provide for them a competency of the necessaries of life ; and indeed their right to rule is but a power to provide for themselves and their domestics.

This is implied in my text, where the apostle makes the omission of this duty utterly inconsistent with christianity ; and a crime so unnatural, that even infidels are free from it. *If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

The apostle, among other things, in this chapter is giving directions how widows should be treated in the church. If they were widows indeed ; that is, widowed and entirely destitute of relations to support them ; then he advises to maintain them at the public expense of the church. (ver. 3, 9, 10.) But if they were such widows as had children or nephews, then he orders

that they should be maintained by these their relatives, and that the charge should not fall upon the church. (ver. 4. 16)

He supposes that the relatives of some of them might be unwilling to put themselves to this expense : and to engage such to their duty, he in the text exposes the unnatural wickedness of neglecting it. *If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

By a man's *own* are meant poor relatives, who are unable to support themselves. And by his house are meant those that are his domestics, and that live with him, as wife, children, servants. The former a man is obliged to provide for, but especially the latter ; and if he neglect it, he has denied the faith in fact, however much he may profess it in words ; he is no christian, nor to be treated as such : nay, he is worse than an infidel ; for many heathens have had so much humanity and natural light, as to observe their duty, supporting their domestics and such of their relatives as could not procure a subsistence for themselves.

In order to make provision for our families, we must be careful or laborious, according to our circumstances, and see that all our domestics be so too. *And him that will not work, neither let him eat.* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

' This, some of you will say, is excellent doctrine, and this is our favourite text, which we often descant upon to justify our eager pursuit of the world. This commandment have we kept from our youth up ; and, as we exert ourselves to provide estates for our children, we are not chargeable with any guilt in this case.' But stay, Sirs ; before you peremptorily conclude yourselves innocent, let me ask you, are your domestics, your wives, children, and servants, nothing but material bodies ? If so, I grant your duty is fulfilled by providing for their bodies. If they are only formed for this world, and have no concern with a future, then it is enough for you to make provision for them in the present state. They are like your cattle, upon this hypothesis, and you may treat them as you do your beasts, fodder them well, and make them work for you. But are you so absurd as to indulge such a thought ? Are you not fully convinced that your domestics were made for eternity, endowed with immortal souls, and have the greatest concern with the eternal world ? If so, can you think it sufficient that you provide for their bodies and their temporal subsistence ? I appeal to yourselves, is there not as much reason for

your taking care of their immortal spirits as of their perishing bodies? Ought you not to be as regardful, and as laborious for their comfortable subsistence in eternity as in time? Nay, is not your obligation to family-religion as much more strong, as an immortal spirit is more important than a machine of animated clay, and the interests of eternity exceed those of this transitory world? If then he that does not provide for his domestics a competency of the necessaries of life *has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*, what shall we say of him that neglects their souls, and takes no pains to form them for an happy immortality? Surely he must be worse than one that is worse than an infidel; and how extremely bad then must he be! He has more than denied the faith, however confidently he may profess it.

You see that though this text does not immediately refer to family-religion, yet it will admit of a very natural accommodation to that purpose: and in this view I intend to handle it.

Several of you, my hearers, I doubt not, have long since formed and practised Joshua's resolution; *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Josh. xxiv. 15. While vanity laughs aloud, and impiety belches out its blasphemies in families around you, *the voice of spiritual rejoicing and salvation is heard in your tabernacles.* Psalm cxviii. 15. I congratulate you, my dear brethren, and hope your families will be nurseries for religion in future times, and educate many for the heavenly state; nay, I hope you have seen some of the happy effects of it already in the early impressions that begin to appear upon the tender minds of your dear children, and the promising solemnity and reformation of some of your slaves. It were to be wished that all of you made conscience of this matter, and it would not at all seem extravagant to expect it; for surely it would not be extravagant to expect that you, who attend upon public worship, and profess the religion of Jesus, should not so grossly deny the faith as to be worse than infidels But alas! my friends, though I do not affect to be a spy into your families, *I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy*, lest some of you habitually neglect this very important duty. Though family-religion be not the peculiarity of a party, but owned to be obligatory by christians in general (and therefore christians of all denominations should conscientiously observe it, if they would act consistently with their own principles) yet are there not several in this assembly who live without religion in their houses? Conscience can find out the guilty, and I need not be more particular. It is cer-

tainly a most lamentable thing that any who have enjoyed such opportunities for instruction, who have been solemnly and frequently warned, exhorted, and persuaded, and who have come under the strongest obligation to this duty, should notwithstanding live in the wilful and habitual neglect of it. For persons to omit it for want of instruction about its obligation might be very consistent with a tender conscience, and nothing would be necessary to bring such to the practice, but to convince them it is their duty, which it is very easy to do ; but to omit family-religion in our circumstances, my brethren, discovers such a stupid indifferency about religion, or so inveterate an aversion to it, that it is lamentably doubtful, whether a conviction of the duty will determine you to the practice of it. When persons have long habituated themselves to sin against light, it is hard to take any effectual measures to deal with them. All that the ministers of the gospel can do, is to convince their understandings, to persuade, to exhort, to invite, to threaten ; but such are accustomed to resist these means, and now they find it no great difficulty to master them. I therefore make this attempt with discouragement, and hardly hope to succeed with such of you as have hitherto obstinately fought against conviction ; and the attempt is still the more melancholy, as I know that, if what shall be offered does not prevail upon you to make conscience of family-religion, the additional light you may receive will but render you more inexcusable, increase your guilt, and consequently your punishment. This is one of the tremendous consequences of the ministry of this neglected, disregarded gospel, that may strike ministers and people with a solemn horror. However, I am not without hopes of success with some of you, who have not yet been cursed with a horrid victory over your consciences. I hope that when you are more fully convinced of this duty, you will immediately begin the practice of it. But though I had no expectation of success, I am still obliged to make the attempt. Though nothing can animate a minister more than the prospect of success, yet he is not to regulate his conduct wholly according to this prospect. He must labour to deliver his own soul, by warning even such as may not regard it. He must declare the whole counsel of God, whether they hear, or whether they forbear. I shall therefore, my dear brethren, endeavour honestly this day to bring you to Joshua's resolution, *that you and your houses will serve the Lord ;* and let him who is hardy enough to despise it, prepare to answer for it at the supreme tribunal ; for he despiseth not man, but God.

I would not have you perform any thing as a duty, till you have sufficient means to convince you that it is a duty; and I would not confine you to an over-frequent performance of the duty I am now to open to you; therefore, when I have briefly mentioned the various parts of family religion, I shall,

I. Prove it to be a duty, from the law of nature and scripture-revelation.

II. Shew in what seasons, or how frequently family-religion should be statedly performed.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses. And,

IV. And lastly, I shall answer the usual objections made against this important duty.

As to the parts of family-religion, they are prayer, praise, and instruction. We and our families stand in need of blessings in a domestic capacity, therefore in that capacity we should pray for them; in that capacity too we receive many blessings; therefore in that capacity we should return thanks for them; and singing of psalms is the most proper method of thanksgiving. Further: Our domestics need instructions about the great concerns of religion, therefore we should teach them. But I need not stay to prove each of these branches to be a duty, because the following arguments for the whole of family-religion, will be equally conclusive for each part of it, and may be easily accommodated to it. Therefore,

I. I shall prove that family-religion is a duty, from the light of nature and of scripture.

To prepare the way, I would observe that you should hear what shall be offered with a mind in love with your duty when it appears. You would not willingly have a cause tried by one that is your enemy; now *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, and consequently while you retain that carnal mind, you are very unfit to judge of the force of those arguments that prove your duty towards him. If you hate the discovery, you will shut your eyes against the light, and not receive the truth in love. Therefore lie open to conviction, and I doubt not but you shall receive it from the following arguments.

If family-religion be due to the supreme Being upon the account of his perfections, and the relation he bears to us,—if it be one great design of the institution of families,—if it tend to the

advantage of our domestics,—if it be our privilege,—then family-religion appears to be our duty from the law of nature.

1. If family-religion be a just debt to the supreme Being, upon account of his perfections and the relation he sustains to us as families, then it must be our duty to maintain it according to the law of nature. Now this is the case in fact.

God is the most excellent of beings, and therefore worthy of homage in every capacity, from his reasonable creatures. It is the supreme excellency of the Deity that renders him the object of personal devotion, or the religion of individuals, and the same reason extends to family-religion ; for such is his excellency, that he is entitled to all the worship which we can give him ; and after all, *he is exalted above all our blessing and praise.* Nehem. ix. 5. that is, he still deserves more blessing and praise than we can give him. Hence it follows, that our capacity is the measure of our obligation to serve him ; that is, in whatever capacity we are that admits of service to him, we are bound to perform all that service to him, because he justly deserves it all. Now we are capable of worshipping him as a family, for family-devotion, you must own, is a thing possible in itself, therefore we are bound to worship him in that capacity. If any of you deny this, do but put your denial into plain words, and you must shudder at yourselves : it must stand thus, ' I must own that such is the excellency of the Deity, that he has a right to all the homage which I can pay him in every capacity : yet I owe him none, I will pay none in the capacity of an head of a family. I own I owe him worship from myself as an individual, but my family as such shall have nothing to do with him.' Will you, Sirs, rather run into such an impious absurdity as this, than own yourselves obliged to this duty ?

Again, God is the Author of our sociable natures, and as such claims social worship from us. He formed us capable of society, and inclined us to it : and surely this capacity ought to be improved for religious purposes. Is there any of you so hardy as to say, ' Though God has made me a sociable creature, yet I owe him no worship as such, and will pay him none ?' You may as well say, ' Though he formed me a man, and endowed me with powers to serve him, yet as a man or an individual, I will not serve him.' And what is this but to renounce all obligations to God, and to cut yourselves off from all connection with him. Now if your social nature lays you under an obligation to social

religion, then it must oblige you to family-religion, for a family is the first society that ever was instituted; it is a radical society, from which all others are derived, therefore here social religion began (as it must have begun in families before it had place in other societies) and here it ought still to continue.

Again, God is the Proprietor, Supporter, and Benefactor of our families, as well as of our persons, and therefore our families as such should pay him homage. He is the owner of your families, and where is the man that dares deny it? Dare any of you say, God hath nothing to do with my family; he hath no right there, and I will acknowledge none? Unhappy creatures! Whose property are you then? If not God's you are helpless orphans indeed; or rather the voluntary avowed subjects of hell. But if your families are his property, must you not own that you should worship him as such? What! pay no acknowledgment to your great Proprietor? how unjust! The apostle argues, that because our persons are his, therefore we should serve him, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. and surely the argument is equally strong in this case. Further, Are not your families entirely dependent upon God as their Supporter and Benefactor? Should he withdraw his supporting hand, you and your houses would sink into ruin together. Are you not then obliged in a family-capacity to acknowledge and praise him? You also receive numberless blessings from him in a domestic capacity: every evening and morning, every night and day you find his mercies flowing down upon your houses, and shall no grateful acknowledgments ascend from them to him? You also every moment stand in need of numerous blessings, not only for yourselves, but for your families, and will you not jointly with your families implore these blessings from your divine Benefactor? Here again consider the language of your refusal, and it must strike you with horror: 'I own that God is the proprietor of my family, that he is the constant support of my family, that I and mine every moment receive mercies from him, and depend entirely upon him for them, yet my family as such shall pay no worship, shall serve him no more than if we had no concern with him.' Can you venture upon such a declaration as this?

2. If family-religion was the principal design of the institution of families, then is family-religion our indispensable duty.

That families were founded by God may be inferred from the creation of different sexes, the institution of marriage, and the

various relations among mankind, and from the universal agency of his providence. Psalm lxviii. 6. and cxiii. 9.

And that family-religion was the principal end of the institution, is evident ; for can you think that God would unite a number of immortals, heirs of the eternal world, together in the most intimate bonds, in this state of trial, without any reference to their future state ? Were your families made for this world only, or for the next ? If for the next, then religion must be maintained in them, for that alone can prepare you for eternity : or if you say your families were formed for this world, pray what was this world made for ? To be the final residence ? or to be only a stage along which to pass into your everlasting home, a place of probation for candidates for immortality ? And must not religion then be maintained in your families ? They should be nurseries for heaven ; and that they cannot be, if you banish devotion from them.

If the conjugal relation, which is the foundation of families, was first instituted for religious purposes, then certainly the worship of God ought to be maintained in them. But the former is true : *Did not he make one ?* Mal. ii. 15. that is, one of each sex, that there might be one for one ; and that the very creation of our nature might carry an intimation that polygamy was unnatural. ' And wherefore one ?' that is, wherefore did God make but one of each sex, when *he had the residue of the spirit*, and could have made more ? Why his design was *that he might seek a godly seed ;* that is, that children might not only be procreated, but retain and convey down religion from age to age. But can this design be accomplished if you refuse to maintain religion in your families ? Can you expect that godliness shall run on in the line of your posterity, if you habitually neglect it in your houses ! Can a godly seed be raised in so corrupt a soil ? Therefore if you omit this duty, you live in families in direct opposition to the end of the institution, and deny your domestics the greatest advantage they can enjoy as members of a family : a consideration which leads me to another argument.

3. If family-religion tends to the greatest advantage of our families, then it is our duty ; and to neglect it is wickedly to rob ourselves and ours of the greatest advantage.

If you deny that religion is advantageous, you may renounce the name of christians ; yes, and of men too. Religion places its subjects under the blessing and guardianship of Heaven ; it re-

strains them from those practices which may be ruinous to them in time and eternity ; it suppresses such dispositions and passions as are turbulent and self-tormenting ; and affords the most refined and substantial joys.

Now I appeal to yourselves whether it be not more probable that your family will be religious, if you solemnly worship God with them, and instruct them, than it would be if you neglected these duties ? How can you expect that your children and servants will become worshippers of the God of heaven, if they have been educated in the neglect of family-religion ? Can prayerless parents expect to have praying children ? If you neglect to instruct them, can you expect they will grow up in the knowledge of God and of themselves ? If they see that you receive daily mercies from the God of heaven, and yet refuse him the tribute of praise, is it not likely they will imitate your ingratitude, and spend their days in a stupid insensibility of their obligations to their divine Benefactor ? Is it as likely they will make it their principal business in life to secure the favour of God, and prepare for eternity, when they see their parents and masters thoughtless about this important concern, as if they saw you every day devoutly worshipping God with them, and imploring his blessing upon yourselves and your households ? Their souls Sirs, their immortal souls are entrusted to your care, and you must give a solemn account of your trust ; and can you think you faithfully discharge it, while you neglect to maintain your religion in your families ? Will you not be accessary to their perdition, and in your skirts will there not be found the blood of your poor innocent children ? What a dreadful meeting may you expect to have with them at last ! Therefore, if you love your children ; if you would make some amends to your servants for all the service they do to you ; if you would bring down the blessing of Heaven upon your families ; if you would have your children make their houses the receptacles of religion when they set up in life for themselves ; if you would have religion survive in this place, and be conveyed from age to age ; if you would deliver your own souls—I beseech, I entreat, I charge you to begin and continue the worship of God in your families from this day to the close of your lives.

4. You are to consider family-religion not merely as a duty imposed by authority, but as your greatest privilege granted by divine grace. How great the privilege to hold a daily intercourse

with Heaven in our dwellings! to have our houses converted into temples for that adorable Deity whom the heavens and the heaven of heavens cannot contain! to mention our domestic wants before him with the encouraging hope of a supply! to vent the overflowings of gratitude! to spread the savour of his knowledge, and talk of him whom angels celebrate upon their golden harps and in anthems of praise! to have our families devoted to him while others live estranged from the God of their life! if all this does not appear the highest privilege to you, it is because you are astonishingly disaffected to the best of Beings. And since the Almighty condescends to allow you this privilege, will you wickedly deny it yourselves? If he had denied it to you, you would no doubt have cavilled at it as hard: you would have murmured had he laid a prohibition on your family and told you, "I will accept of worship from other families: they shall converse with me every day; but as for yours, I will have nothing to do with them, I will accept of no worship from them; you may not make mention of the name of the Lord." How would you tremble if God had marked your families with such a brand of reprobation? And will you put this brand upon them with your own hand? Will you deny that privilege to your families which would strike you with horror if God had denied it? Will you affect such an horrid singularity, that when other families are admitted into a familiar audience with the Deity, you will keep off from him, and pay him no homage in yours!

These arguments are chiefly derived from the light of nature, and plainly shew that family-religion is a duty of natural religion. Accordingly heathens and idolaters have observed it. The heathens had their Lares, their Penates, or household gods. Such were Laban's gods which Rachel stole from him, Gen. xxxi. 34. and such were that of Micah. Judges xvii. 4, 5. These indeed were idols, but what did they stand instead of? Did they not stand instead of the true worship of the true God? What reformation was necessary in this case? The renouncing of these idols, and taking nothing in their room? or the renouncing of them and taking the true God in their place? Undoubtedly the latter. And will you not blush that heathens should exceed you? that you should be, according to the text, *worse than infidels?* And must you not tremble lest they should rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you?

I now proceed to some arguments more purely scriptural, which prove the necessity of family-religion in general, or of some particular branch of it.

1. We may argue from the examples of the saints, recorded and commended in scripture.

Good examples infer an obligation upon us to imitate them; and when they are transmitted down to posterity with honour in the sacred records, they are proposed to our imitation, and as really bind us to the duty as express precepts.

Now we are here surrounded with a bright cloud of witnesses. Even before the introduction of the clearer dispensation of the gospel, we find that the saints carefully maintained family-religion.

On this account Abraham was admitted into such intimacy with God, that he admits him into his secrets. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; since—I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, &c.* Gen. xviii. 16, 18.

We find Isaac and Jacob, by the influence of his good example and instructions, follow the same practice. They, as well as he, built an altar to the Lord wherever they pitched their tents; an altar then being a necessary utensil for divine worship. This you will find repeatedly in the short history we have of these patriarchs, particularly in Gen. xxvi. 25. xxv. 1, 3. and xxxiii. 20.

We find Job so intent upon family-devotion, that he rises up early in the morning and offers burnt-offerings: and thus he did, we are told, not upon extraordinary occasions only, but continually. Job i. 5.

The devout king David, after he had spent the day in the glad solemnity of bringing the ark to its place, returned to bless his house. 2 Sam. vi. 20. He had his hour for family-devotion; and when that is come, he leaves the solemnity of public worship, and hastens home. This was agreeable to his resolution, *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Psal. ci. 2.

Daniel ran the risk of his life rather than omit this duty, which some of you omit with hardly any temptation. When the royal edict prohibited him, upon penalty of being cast into the lions' den, *he still prayed and gave thanks to God, as he did aforetime.—As he did aforetime.* This is added to shew that he had always observed a stated course of devotion in his family, and that it was not a transient fit of zeal that now seized him. Dan. vi. 10.

These illustrious patterns we find under the dark dispensation of the Old Testament. How much more zealous should we be, who enjoy the meridian light of the gospel, to keep the religion of Jesus in our families!

In the New Testament we repeatedly find our blessed Lord in prayer with his family, the apostles. St. Paul thrice mentions a church in a private house. Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19, and Col. iv. 15. by which he probably means the religious families of Nymphas, and that pious pair Priscilla and Aquila. And Cornelius is an instance peculiarly observable, who, though an heathen, and ignorant of the coming of Christ, *feared God* (an expression that often signifies to worship God) *with all his house*; *and prayed unto God always*; that is, at all proper seasons. And when a divine messenger was sent to him to direct him to send for Peter, we are told he was found praying in his house; that is, with his domestics, as the word often signifies. Acts x. 2, 30.

If it might have any weight after such authentic examples as these, I might add, That in every age, persons of piety have been exemplary in family-religion. And if you look round you, my brethren, you will find that by how much the more religious persons are, by so much the more conscientious they are in this duty. What though some, like the Pharisees, use it as a cloke for their clandestine wickedness, this is no objection against the practice; otherwise there is hardly one branch of religion or morality but what must be rejected too; for every good thing has been abused by hypocrites to disguise their secret villany.

2. We may argue from several scripture precepts, which either directly or consequentially refer to the whole, or to some branch of family-religion.

The apostle Paul, having given various directions about relative duties in families, subjoins, *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* Col. iv. 2. Peter exhorts *husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge,* &c —*that their prayers might not be hindered.* 1 Pet. iii. 7. which certainly implies that they should pray together. And here I may observe by the by, what is perhaps immediately intended in this text, that beside the stated worship of God, common to all the family, it may be very proper for the husband and wife to retire for prayer at proper seasons by themselves together. As there is a peculiar intimacy between them, they ought to be peculiarly intimate in the duties of religion; and when retired together, they may

pour out their hearts with more freedom than before all the family, and particularize those things that could not be prudently mentioned before others. But to return: we are enjoined to *pray always with all prayer and supplication.* Ephes. vi. 18. and surely family-prayer must be included in these comprehensive terms.

As to family-instruction, it was expressly enjoined upon the Israelites. *These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house.* Deut. vi. 6, 7. and xi. 19. They were commanded to instruct their domestics in the nature and design of the ordinances of that dispensation, particularly the passover. Exod. xii. 26, 27. And the psalmist mentions all the wonderful works of God as what ought to be taught by parents to children from age to age. And must not parents now be under even superior obligations to inform their children of the more glorious doctrines and ordinances of the gospel? Again, It is enjoined as a duty common to christians in general, though they should not be united in one family, *to exhort one another daily,* Heb. iii. 13. and to *teach and admonish one another.* Col. iii. 16. How much more then is it our duty to teach, and admonish, and exhort our families, which are more particularly entrusted to our care?

As to family-praise, it is a duty, because thanksgiving is so often joined with prayer in scripture, Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thess. v. 17, 18. and psalmody must be owned the most proper method of expressing thankfulness by such as own it a part of divine worship. *The voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous,* Psalm cviii. 15. an expression that may properly signify, *praising God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,* as we are commanded. Col. iii. 16.

And now, my brethren, I presume you are convinced that family-religion is a duty, unless you shut your eyes against the light of nature and the light of scripture; and if convinced, you are reduced to this dilemma, either to set up the worship of God immediately in your families, or sin wilfully against the knowledge of the truth. And which side will you choose? O, Sirs, the case is so plain, you need no time to deliberate; it is as plain as whether you should choose life or death, heaven or hell!

If you from henceforth make conscience of this important duty, it will be a most happy omen to your families, and to this

congregation. If the grateful incense of family-devotion were ascending to heaven every morning and evening, from every family among us, we might expect a rich return of divine blessings upon ourselves and ours. Our houses would become the temples of the Deity, and our congregation feel his gracious influences. Our children would grow up in the knowledge and fear of God, and transplant religion from our families into their own whenever they shall be formed. Our servants and slaves would become the servants of righteousness, and heirs with us of the grace of life. The animosities and contests that may now disturb our households, and render them like the dens of wild beasts, would cease. Vice would wither and die among us, and languishing religion would lift up its head and revive. This would certainly be the consequence in several instances, if we were but to maintain family-religion in a proper manner; for God hath not commanded us to seek his face in vain; and if this desirable success should not be granted universally, we shall still have the comfort to reflect that we have done our duty.

But how shocking is the prospect, if you determine to resist conviction, and live in the wilful neglect of this duty! Your families are like to be nurseries for hell; or if there should be an Abijah in them, *one in whom some good thing is found towards the Lord God of Israel*, (1 Kings xiv. 13.) no thanks to you for it; you must be punished for your neglect of him as though he had perished by your iniquity.

Remember, Sirs, that the omission of a known, practicable duty against the remonstrances of your conscience, is a certain evidence that you are entirely destitute of all religion; and therefore I must discharge the artillery of heaven against you in that dreadful imprecation which, as dictated by inspiration, is equivalent to a prediction or denunciation. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.* Jer. x. 25. Observe here that you are ranked with heathens that know not God; and that the divine fury is imprecated upon you, and it shall fall, it shall fall speedily upon your devoted heads and your prayerless families, unless you fly out of its reach by flying to the Lord in earnest supplications in your houses. Will you rather run the venture, will you rather destroy yourselves and your domestics too, than spend a quarter or half an hour, morning and evening, in the most manly, noble, heavenly, evangelical exercises of devotion! Surely you are not so hardy! surely

you are not so averse to God, and careless about your own welfare, and that of your dearest relatives and domestics! I request, I beg, I adjure you by your regard to the authority of God, by your concern for your own salvation and that of your families, by the regards you bear the interests of religion in this place, and your poor minister, that this may be the happy evening from whence you may date the worship of God in your houses; that this may be the blessed era from which you and your houses will serve the Lord.

I proceed,

II. To shew in what seasons, or how frequently, family-religion should be statedly performed.

Now it is more than intimated in scripture, that it should be performed every day, and particularly morning and evening. Thus the sacrifices under the law, which were attended with prayer, were offered daily, morning and evening. To this the psalmist alludes: *Let my prayer be set before thee as incense*, which was offered in the morning, *and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* Psalm cxli. 2. He elsewhere resolves, *Every day will I bless thee*, Ps. cxlv. 2. Yea, his devotion was so extraordinary, that he resolves, *Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud.* Psalm lv. 17. So Daniel performed family-worship thrice a day. Hence we are undoubtedly bound to perform family-religion twice at least in the day. And thus frequently it seems to be enjoined for common. *It is a good thing to shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.* Psalm xcii. 1, 2. Farther, reason directs us to morning and evening as the proper season for family-worship: for, pray, which would you omit? Dare you venture your families out into the world all the day without committing them to the care of Providence in the morning? Can you undertake your secular pursuits without imploring the divine blessing upon them? And as to the evening, how can you venture to sleep, without committing yourselves and yours to the divine protection, and returning thanks for the mercies of the day? Again, the very course of nature seems to direct us to these seasons. Our life is parcelled out into so many days; and every day is a kind of life, and sleep a kind of death. And shall we enter upon life in the morning, without acknowledging the Author of our life? Or shall we, as it were, die in the evening, and not commend our departing spirits into his hands? Night is a kind of

pause, a stop, in the progress of life, and should kindle a devout temper in us towards our divine Preserver. I shall only add, that the prophet hints that we should seek the Lord as the Author of the revolutions of night and day ; *Seek him that turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night*, Amos v. 8. that is, seek him under that notion ; and what time so proper for this as evening and morning ? Therefore, my brethren, determine to begin and conclude the day with God.

III. I shall consider what particular obligation the heads of families lie under, and what authority they are invested with to maintain religion in their houses.

In all societies there must be a subordination, and particularly in families, and it is the place of the head of such societies to rule and direct. Particularly it belongs to the head of a family, when there is no fitter person present, to perform worship in it, to use proper means to cause all his domestics to attend upon it. The gentler methods of persuasion ought to be used, where they will succeed ; but when it is unavoidable, compulsive measures may be taken, to oblige all our domestics to an attendance. The consciences of all, bond and free, are subject to God only, and no man ought to compel another to any thing, as a duty, that is against his conscience. But this is not the case here. Your domestics may plead a great many excuses for not joining in family-worship, but they will hardly plead that it is against their conscience ; that is, they will hardly say that they think they should sin against God in so doing. Here then you may use your authority ; and perhaps some word they hear may touch their hearts. You should, in common cases, cause them all to attend morning and evening, unless your servants are scattered in different quarters, and make conscience of praying together, which you should exhort them to do, and for which you should allow them convenient time.

That you are authorized and obliged to all this, is evident from God's commending Abraham for commanding his children, &c. from Joshua's resolving, that not only he, but also his house, should serve the Lord ; a resolution he could not perform, unless he had authority over his house to compel them, at least externally, to serve the Lord, (Josh. xxiv. 15.) and from the superiority which you have over your domestics, which enables you to command them in this case, as well as in your own affairs.

IV. And lastly, I come to answer the usual objections against this important duty of family-religion.

It would be more honest for people frankly to own that they have no heart to it, and that this is the real cause of their neglecting it, and not any valid objections they have against it; but since they will torture their invention to discover some pleas to excuse themselves, we must answer them.

1st Objection. 'I have no time, and my secular business would suffer by family-religion.'

Were you formed for this world only, there would be some force in this objection; but how strange does such an objection sound in the heir of an eternity? Pray, what is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for what is the great business of your lives?

Again, Why do not you plead too, that you have no time for your daily meals? Is food more necessary for your bodies than religion for your souls? If you think so, what is become of your understandings?

Further, What employment do you follow? Is it lawful or unlawful? If unlawful, then renounce it immediately; if lawful, then it will admit of the exercise of family-religion, for God cannot command contradictions; and since he has commanded you to maintain his worship in your houses, that is demonstration that every calling which he allows you to follow will afford time for it.

Finally, May you not redeem as much time from idle conversation, from trifling, or even from your sleep, as may be sufficient for family-religion? May you not order your family-devotion so as that your domestics may attend upon it, either before they go out to their work, or when they come to their meals?

2nd Objection. 'I have not ability to pray; I am too ignorant.'

If you had a proper sense of your wants, this plea would not hinder you. Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense of his necessities is an unfailing fountain of his eloquence.

Further, How strange does this objection sound from you! What! have you enjoyed preaching, Bibles, and good books so

long, and yet do not know what to ask of God? Alas! what have you been doing?

Again, Is neglecting prayer the way to improve in knowledge and qualify you to perform it?

Finally, May you not easily furnish yourselves with forms of prayer, which you may use as persons weak in their limbs do their crutches, till you can lay them aside? It is bigotry only that will say that you should neglect the substance of the duty, if you cannot perform every circumstance of it in the best manner.

3d Objection. 'I am ashamed.'

But is this shame well grounded? Is it really a shame to worship the God of heaven, and share in the employment of angels?

Are sinners ashamed to serve their master?

A little practice will easily free you from all this difficulty.

4th Objection. 'But, alas! I know not how to begin it.'

Here, indeed, the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto mistaken, and that you would rather reform, than persist obstinately in the omission of an evident duty?

5th Objection. 'But my family will not join with me.'

How do you know? Have you tried? Are you not master of your own family? Exert that authority in this which you claim in other cases.

6th Objection. 'But I shall be ridiculed and laughed at.'

Are you then more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than him?

Will you never become religious till you can obtain the applause of the wicked for being so? Then you will never be religious at all.

Think how you will bear the contempt of the whole universe at last for the neglect of this duty!

Therefore, wherever you have your habitations, there let Jehovah, may I so speak, have an altar, and there let morning and evening prayers and praises be presented, till you are called to worship him in his temple above, where your prayers shall be swallowed up in everlasting praise. AMEN.

Sermon 30.

THE RULE OF EQUITY.

MATT. VII. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

CHRISTIANITY is not a fragment, but a complete system of religion; and it is intended and adapted to make us good entirely and throughout: it teaches us a proper conduct and temper towards every being with whom we have any connection, particularly towards God and our fellow men. A christian is a complete, uniform, finished character; a character in which there is the most amiable symmetry and proportion; it is all of a piece, without chasms and inconsistencies. A christian is a penitent, a believer, a lover of God, conscientious in devotion, and diligent in attendance upon every ordinance of religious worship; he begins his religion with a supreme regard to God, the Supreme of beings, sensible, that unless he begins here, he inverts the order of things, and that all his religion and virtue must be preposterous and vain. To love the Lord his God with all his heart, and to serve him from that exalted principle, is the first and great commandment with him; and he observes it as such. Religion, virtue, morality, and every thing that bears a specious name among mankind, is a poor maimed thing, monstrously defective, if a proper regard to God be left out of the system. It is shocking and unnatural for the creatures of God to be punctual in observing the duties they owe to one another, and yet entirely negligent of those radical fundamental duties they owe to him, their common Parent, the highest excellence, and the original of all authority and obligation.

But though christianity begins with, and chiefly consists in, our duty to God, yet it extends farther; it also includes a proper conduct and temper towards men. A good christian is not only devout, but moral and virtuous: he is not only a dutiful servant of God in matters purely religious, but he is an useful member of every society to which he belongs, and makes conscience of justice, charity, and all the good offices due to his

fellow-creatures. He is a good ruler, or a good subject, a good neighbour, a good father or child, a good master or servant; in short, he endeavours to have a *conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.* I have made it the great object of my ministry among you, to bring you to pay a proper regard to God, as he has revealed himself in the gospel of his Son; and for this purpose, have inculcated the important doctrines of faith, repentance, love, and those other graces which are essential to every good man. But I must not forget another part of my office, which is, to teach you the second great command, or summary of the divine law, namely, *That you should love your neighbour as yourselves*, and inculcate upon you those important duties which you owe to mankind; and it is very extravagant for persons to disgust these, through a pretended relish for the gospel and the doctrines of grace, since these are no inconsiderable parts of the gospel, and the lessons of morality run through the whole New Testament.

When I would discourse upon the duties of social life, I cannot choose a text more pertinent or copious than that I have read to you, which is a fundamental and most comprehensive rule of morality; *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

In the illustration and improvement of this subject, I shall,

I. Offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule of social duty.

II Consider the reason of it.

III. Open its excellency.

IV. Mention some important instances of particular cases to which it should be applied. And,

Lastly, Shew the necessity and advantage of observing it.

I. I am to offer a few things for the right understanding of this divine rule.

It is proper then to observe, that as there is a great diversity in the stations and characters of men, there is a proportionable diversity in the duties which they owe one to another; and self-love may make a man very extravagant in his expectations and desires about the conduct of another towards him. On these accounts it is necessary that we should understand this precept with these two cautions or limitations.

1. That we should do that to others which we would expect and wish from them upon a change of condition, or if they were in our

circumstances and we in theirs. Every man should be treated according to his character and station ; and therefore that conduct which may be proper towards me in my station, may not be proper towards another in a different station : but let me suppose myself in his place, and he in mine, and then that behaviour which I would expect from him, the same I should observe towards him. Thus, for example, a magistrate is bound to protect his subjects, and to behave towards them as he would desire a ruler to behave towards him if he were a subject ; but he is not bound to yield that submission to his subjects while a ruler, which he may justly demand of them. The rule in such cases is, let every man act in character ; let him perform to others those duties which he would desire from others if they were in his circumstances, and he in theirs ; and where there is a sameness of circumstances, there, and there only, his duty to others must be the same that he expects from them.

2. We should make only our reasonable and lawful expectations from others the rule of our conduct towards them. A man may expect and wish very extravagant and sinful things from others : he may desire another should give him all his estate, or gratify his wicked lusts and passions by some criminal compliance : such desires are by no means to be the rule of conduct ; for we cannot indulge them, nor others comply with them, without acting wickedly and unreasonably. But those things which we may desire and expect from others, consistently with right reason, religion, and the laws of society, those things we ought to perform to them ; those things which our consciences justify, and not those to which inordinate self-love or some extravagant passion may prompt us.

If we understand this precept with such limitations as these, we may safely follow it as a general rule of conduct ; and then it will not be liable to such objections as may be otherwise made against it. For example, a criminal may plead, ' If I were in the place of my judge, and he in mine, I would acquit him, and grant him his life.' Or a judge might think, ' if I were in the place of that poor criminal, I should be glad my judge would forgive me : and therefore, if I would do as I would be done by, I must forgive him.' Such thoughts as these, arising from wrong principles, are not to be the rule and measure of our actions or expectations ; for our own consciences cannot approve of them in our sedate and impartial moments. I proceed,

II. To consider the reason of this precept.

Now the reason or foundation of it is evidently this, namely, the natural equality of mankind. For notwithstanding the great difference in the capacities, improvements, characters, and stations of men, yet, considered as men, they share in the same common nature, and are so far equal; and therefore, in the same circumstances, they have a right to the same treatment. A superior, for example, should treat his inferior just in the manner in which he would reasonably expect to be treated himself if he was in a low condition and his inferior advanced to his station. If there be any reason why another should behave in such a manner to me, there is the very same reason that I should behave in the same manner towards him; because he is to himself what I am to myself, as near, as dear, as important. Is it reasonable my neighbour should make no encroachments upon my property? It is equally reasonable that I should not encroach upon his; for his property is as much his as my property is mine. Do I expect my neighbour should observe the rules of justice in his dealings with me? then certainly I should observe them in my dealings with him; for he has as good a right to be treated according to these rules by me, as I have to be so treated by him. If it is reasonable that he should be tender of my good name, it is equally reasonable, that I should be tender of his. If he should relieve me in my calamities, certainly I am equally bound to relieve him when in the same circumstances. And the reason is plain; he is to himself what I am to myself, and he is to me what I am to him, and therefore I am obliged to treat him as I would justly expect he would treat me; we are equal, and consequently our obligations are equal, and our duties mutual or reciprocal. Hence you see that this precept is the most reasonable thing in the world. My next business is,

III. To open the excellency of it.

And this appears (1.) from its comprehensiveness; it includes all the social duties of life; it is a short summary of the whole divine law, as far as it refers to our conduct towards man. This excellency Christ himself points out: *This*, says he, *is the law and the prophets*; that is, it is the substance of both: do to others what you would have others do to you, and then you do to them all that the law and the prophets, and I may add, all that Christ and the apostles require you to do. Now it is a great advantage to have the whole of our duty collected into such narrow bounds, and

presented to us at one view : we are not sent to pore over tedious volumes of laws and statutes, or to gather up fragments of precepts here and there in order to learn our duty to one another ; it is all summed up in this, *Do to others what you would have them do to you.* With this is connected another excellency of this precept ; and that is,

2. Its conciseness : it is what I may call a portable directory, which you may always carry about with you and easily recollect ; and therefore you need never be at a loss to know your duty. You may always know your own expectations and desires ; do to others then what you would expect and desire from them, and you are right ; you do all that the law and the prophets require you to do. Tedious precepts and long discourses are not so easily learned or remembered ; but the shortest memory cannot fail to recollect this concise command.

3. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is universal, and extends to all mankind, in all circumstances ; to superiors, inferiors, and equals. It is true there is a great diversity in the characters and stations of men, which it is not your business, nor is it in your power to alter ; and there is a correspondent variety in the duties you owe them. But you can easily imagine them all in the same circumstances ; or you can easily suppose yourselves in their place, and they in yours ; and then you can with equal ease look into your own minds, and consider what treatment you would expect from them in such a change of circumstances ; and that will immediately discover how you should treat them in their present circumstances. Thus the rule may be universally applied without impropriety.

4. Another excellency of this precept is, that it is plain and convictive. Common minds may be bewildered, instead of being guided, by an intricate, tedious system of laws ; but a man of the weakest understanding may easily perceive this rule. It is an appeal to his own sensations. 'What would you expect or wish from others ? How would you have them treat you ?' Surely you cannot but know this ; 'well, treat them just in the same manner.' This is also a most convictive rule ; every man that thinks a little, must immediately own that it is highly reasonable ; consult your own consciences, and they will tell you, you need no other adviser, and you are self-condemned if you violate this precept. It is written upon your hearts in illustrious indelible characters : it shines and sparkles there, like the Urim and Thummim on the breast of Aaron. I am,

IV. To mention some important instances of particular cases to which this excellent rule ought to be applied. And here I shall throw a great many things together without method, that my description may agree the nearer to real life, in which these things happen promiscuously without order.

Would you desire that another should love you, be ready to serve you, and do you all the kind offices in his power? Do you expect your neighbour should rejoice in your prosperity, sympathise with you in affliction, promote your happiness, and relieve you in distress? Would you have him observe the rules of strict justice in dealing with you? Would you have him tender of your reputation, ready to put the kindest construction upon your actions, and unwilling to believe or spread a bad report concerning you? Do you desire he should direct you when mistaken, and labour to reclaim you from a dangerous course? In short, do you think it reasonable he should do all in his power for your good, in soul, body, and estate? Are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others towards you? Then in this manner should you behave towards them; you have fixed and determined the rule of your own conduct:* your expectations from others have the force of a law upon yourselves; and since you know how they should behave towards you, you cannot be at a loss to know how to behave towards them.

If you were a servant, how would you have your master to behave towards you? Consider and determine the matter; and you will know how you should behave towards your servants. The same thing may be applied to rulers and subjects in general, to parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbour and neighbour.

On the other hand, we may consider this rule negatively. Do you desire that another should not entertain angry and malicious passions against you? that he should not envy your prosperity, nor insult over you in adversity? that he should not take the advantage of you in contracts? that he should not violate the laws of justice in commerce with you, nor defraud you of your property? that he should not injure your reputation, or put an unkind construction upon your conduct? Would you expect that if you were a servant, your master should not tyrannize over you, and give you hard usage; or that if you were a master, your servant

* ——Tu tibi legem dixisti.

should not be unfaithful, disobedient, and obstinate? are these your expectations and desires with regard to the conduct of others? then you have prescribed a law for your own conduct: do not that to others which you would not have them to do to you: treat every man as another self, as a part of the same human nature with yourself. How extravagant and ridiculous is it that you should be treated well by all mankind, and yet you be at liberty to treat them as you please? What are you? What a being of mighty importance are you? Is not another as dear to himself as you are to yourself? Are not his rights as sacred and inviolable as yours? How came you to be entitled to an exemption from the common laws of human nature? Be it known to you, you are as firmly bound by them as any of your species.

By these few instances you may learn how to apply this maxim of christian morality to all the cases that may occur in the course of your lives.

Were I reading to you a lecture of moral philosophy in the school of Socrates or Seneca, what I have offered might be sufficient. But in order to adapt this discourse to the christian dispensation, and make it true christian morality, it is necessary I should subjoin two evangelical peculiarities, which are the qualifications of that virtue which God will accept.

The first is, that all our good offices to mankind should proceed not only from benevolence to them, but from a regard to the divine authority, which obliges us to these duties. We should do these things not only as they are commanded, but because they are commanded. We cannot expect that God will accept of that as obedience to him, which we do not intend in that view. Let us apply that rule to every social duty, which the apostle particularly applies to the duty of servants to their masters: *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.* Col. iii. 23.

The second qualification of evangelical virtue or true christian morality, is, that you perform it in the name of Christ, or that you depend not upon the merit of your obedience, but entirely upon his mediatorial righteousness to procure acceptance with God. Without this all your actions of charity and justice, however fair and splendid they appear in the eyes of men, are but proud philosophic virtue, utterly abhorred by an holy God. But with this evangelical temper, you will be accepted as serving God, even in serving men. And O! that with these qualifications

this rule may regulate the conduct of each of us! I am sure there is reason enough for it, if the greatest necessity, or the greatest advantage can be a reason. Which consideration leads me,

V. And lastly, To shew the necessity and advantage of observing this rule.

(1.) The observance of this rule is absolutely necessary to constitute you real christians. I hinted at this in the beginning of my discourse; but it is of such vast importance, that it merits a more thorough consideration. A christian not only prays, attends upon religious ordinances, discourses about religion, and the like, but he is also a strict moralist; he is just and charitable, and makes conscience of every duty to mankind; and morality is not only ornamental but essential to his character; and it is in vain for you to pretend to the christian character without morality. An unjust, uncharitable christian, is as great a contradiction as a prayerless, or a swearing christian. You can no more be a good man without loving your neighbour, than without loving your God. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother*, and neglects the duties he owes to him, is really in darkness even until now, (1 John ii. 9.) let him pretend what he will. Therefore if you count it of any importance to be christians indeed, you must do to others what you would have them do to you. No inward experience, no religious duties, no zeal in devotion can make you true christians, or entitle you to the charity of others as such, without a proper temper and behaviour towards mankind. I would have you, my dear brethren, to be complete finished christians; if there be any thing in the world that I have at heart, it is this: I would have christianity appear in you in its full glory, unmaimed and well-proportioned; and therefore I would have you to be not only zealous in devotion in secret, in your families, and in public, but also just, honourable, and faithful in all your dealings with mankind; kind, affectionate, meek and inoffensive in your conduct towards them; in short, that you should treat them as you would have them treat you. You find a great deal of fault with the conduct of others towards you, but consider, have they not equal reason to blame your conduct towards them? My dear brethren, be yourselves what you would have others be: Would you have them to be better than yourselves? Would you meanly resign to them that true honour? Do you desire that they should be better

christians and better men than you? What an awkward, perverse, preposterous humility is this? But,

(2.) A proper conduct towards mankind in the professors of religion, is necessary to recommend religion to the world, and reflect honour upon their profession; whereas the want of it brings a reproach upon the christian name. The blind world has but little knowledge, and still less concern about the duties that we owe immediately to God, and therefore the neglect of them is not so much observed; but as to the duties we owe to mankind, they themselves are concerned in them, and therefore they take the more notice of the omission of them, and are more sensible of the importance. And when they see a man that makes a mighty profession, that talks a great deal about religion, and is zealous in frequent attendance upon sermons, prayer, &c. when they see such a man make no conscience of the laws of justice and charity towards men; when they observe he is as deceitful, as over-reaching, as sordid and covetous as others, and perhaps more so, what will they think of his religion? Will they not think it a cloke for his knavery, and a stratagem to accomplish his own wicked designs? And thus are they hardened in impiety, and confirmed in their neglect of all religion. My brethren, it is incredible what injury the christian religion has received from this quarter: the bad lives of professors is the common objection against it in the mouths of heathens, Jews, Turks, and infidels among ourselves. There is indeed no real force in the objection: you may as well say that moral honesty is but villany, because many who pretend to it are knaves, and make that pretence to carry on their knavery with more success. It must also be confessed, that many discover much of their enmity against religion itself, by raising a clamour against the bad lives of its professors; and that there is much less ground for the objection than they would have you believe. The true secret is this: they hate strict religion themselves, and would find some umbrage to expose it in others, in order to excuse or defend their own neglect of it; and as they can find no objection against religion in itself, they abuse all its professors: and if it is evident that their visible conduct is good, they would find out some secret flaw; and if they can discover no glaring defect in their duty to God, they pry into their conduct towards man, to discover some secret wickedness: and, alas! in too many instances their malignant search is successful; and they find some

that make a mighty profession, who are secretly guilty of some mean or wicked artifices in their transactions with men. Now they think they have found them out, and surmise, 'They are all such; they pray and make a great stir about religion, but they will cheat and lie, when they can do it clandestinely, as readily as their neighbours.' This imputation, when made to christians in the bulk, is not only ungenerous, but utterly false. But it must, alas! be owned, that the fact, upon which it is founded is true with regard to some. And what a melancholy thought is this! The innocent, I mean the consistent and uniform professors of religion, suffer by this conduct of their false brethren; for the same artful hypocrisy will be surmised of them; and religion itself suffers by such conduct; for it gives a disadvantageous idea of religion, as though it were all show and ostentation, and made its most zealous votaries no better in reality than those that neglect and despise it. My brethren, I seriously tell you, I know of nothing in the world that would have a more efficacious tendency to propagate christianity through the nations of the earth, than the good behaviour of its professors. The impiety and bad morals of those that make no profession of religion is evident to all; and if all that profess it would live according to their profession, then the difference would be discernible to all; and even common sense would teach an heathen that it is a difference much for the better; and the world would soon conclude there is something singularly excellent and divine in a religion that sanctifies every thing within its reach, and makes its subjects so evidently better than all mankind besides: they would need no laboured arguments to convince them of this point; their own consciences would afford them sufficient evidence of it, and then it would be sufficient to make an heathen a christian to bring him into the acquaintance of christians; and it would be impossible there should be such a thing as a deist or an infidel free-thinker in a christian country: he would receive conviction from the practice of every one about him, and he would not be able to shut his eyes against it. I am sorry, my brethren, the case is so much the reverse through the generality of the christian world. It is really melancholy that the name of a christian should raise in a stranger any ideas but those of justice, benevolence, and every thing honourable and excellent. I am sure our religion, as we find it in the Bible, is such; but, alas! how different, how opposite is the christian world! Those

that trade among infidels, or that are employed as missionaries among the heathen, can inform you what a fatal obstruction the bad lives of its professors is to the propagation of our holy religion. Why should they embrace a religion which leaves the morals of its followers as bad or worse than their own! This inquiry the light of nature teaches them to make; and it is really hard to answer it satisfactorily. When a Turk could turn upon a christian, who insinuated that he lied, with this reprimand, 'What! do you think I am a christian, that I should lie?' When an Indian can tell a christian missionary, 'If your religion be so much better than ours, as you say it is, how comes it that you white people are no better than we? Nay, you have taught us many vices, which we knew nothing of till our acquaintance with you?' I say, when Turks and heathens can make such repartees, is there any prospect that christianity should be received among them? Alas! no. The same thing may be applied to those careless, vicious, impious multitudes among ourselves, who do indeed usurp the name of christians, but can hardly be said to make any profession of christianity, as their whole lives are openly and avowedly contrary to it. If all who make a stricter profession were to live in character, it would soon afford conviction to these profane sinners: they could not but see the difference, and that it is a shocking difference for the worse on their side. And now, my brethren, shall our holy religion suffer? shall nations be prejudiced against it? shall multitudes of souls be lost by our misconduct? O! can you bear the thought of incurring such dreadful guilt! Well, if you would avoid it, observe the sacred precept in my text. On the other hand, would you not contribute all in your power to render your religion amiable in the world, to convert mankind to it, and thus save souls from death? If you would, then observe this divine rule. Let the world see that you are really the better for your religion, and that your singular profession is not a vain, idle, ostentatious pretence. I have this particular much at heart, and therefore you will bear with me that I have enlarged so much upon it.

(3.) The observance of this sacred rule of equity would have the most happy influence upon human society, and would make this world a little paradise. If men did to others whatever they would have others do to them, such a conduct would put an end to a great part of the miseries of mankind. Then there would be no wars and tumults among the nations, no jealousies and con-

tentions in families, no oppression, fraud, or any form of injustice, no jars, animosities, and confusions in neighbourhoods ; but human society would be a company of friends, and justice, equity, love, charity, kindness, gratitude, sympathy, and all the amiable train of virtues, would reign among them. What an happy state of things would this be ! How different from the present ! And shall not each of us contribute all in our power to bring about such a glorious revolution ?

(4.) The observance of this rule is a piece of prudence with regard to ourselves. It is of great importance to our happiness in this world, that others should treat us well. There are none of us absolutely independent of others ; we are not able to stand as the butt of universal opposition ; or if we are now in happy circumstances, we stand upon a slippery place, and may soon fall as low as our neighbours. Now, the readiest way to be treated well by others, is to treat others well ourselves. If you would have others to behave agreeably to you, you must do so to them ; do what you expect from them. Men often complain of bad neighbours, when they are the occasion of it, by being bad neighbours themselves. There is hardly any place so bad, but a benevolent, inoffensive man may live peaceably in it ; but the contentious will always meet with contention ; for they raise the storm which disturbs them. Therefore, if no other argument has weight with you, for your own sakes, observe this divine rule.

(5.) I shall only add, that unless you conscientiously observe the duties of social life, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Not only sins done immediately against God, and the omission of duties to him, but also sins against our fellow-creatures, and the omission of the duties we owe to them, will exclude men from the kingdom of God Of this we have abundant evidence in scripture. I need only refer you to two comprehensive passages, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. In which you see that all unrighteousness, hatred, variance, strife, envy, extortion, and the like, which are offences against men, will as certainly shut the gates of heaven against you, as idolatry or heresies, which are sins against God. The most plausible experiences, the greatest diligence and zeal in devotion, and the most promising profession of religion, will never bring you to heaven, though absolutely necessary in their place, unless you also abound in good works towards men. And shall this argument have no weight with you ? Is your eternal salvation an insignificant thing with you ?

Are you proof against the terrors of everlasting destruction? If you would enjoy the one and escape the other, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you.'

I shall conclude with one or two reflections.

(1.) If this be the rule of our conduct, alas! how little true morality is there in the world! Men seem to act as if they were entirely detached from one another, and had no connection, or were not at all concerned to promote each other's interest. Self-interest is their pursuit, and self-love their ruling passion; if that be but promoted, and this gratified, they have little or no concern besides. 'Let their neighbours look to themselves, they have no business with them.' If I shall only mention one particular case under this general rule, namely, commerce and bargaining, what a scene of iniquity would it open! Men seem to make this their rule, to get as much for what they sell, and give as little for what they buy, as they can: they hardly ever think what the real value of the thing is, and whether the other party has a tolerable bargain of it: 'Let him look, say they, to that; it is none of their care.' Alas! my brethren, where are the laws of justice and charity, when men behave in this manner? And yet, alas! how common is such a conduct in the commercial world!

(2.) We ought to examine our own conduct in this respect, and it will go a great way to determine whether our religion be true and sincere, or not. If we make conscience of social duty, it is a promising sign that God has written his law in our hearts. But if we can willingly indulge ourselves in any sinful and mean conduct towards men, we may be sure our religion is vain, whatever our pretension be. Let us feel then the pulse of our souls, whether it beats warm and full, both with the love of God and the love of our neighbour. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, let us think on these things.* Phil. iv. 8.

Sermon 31.

Dedication to God argued from redeeming mercy.*

1 cor. vi. 19, 20.—*What! know ye not that ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

MY first and last business with you to day, is to assert a claim which perhaps you have but little thought of, or acknowledged. In the name of God I enter a claim to you, to the whole of you, soul and body, and whatever you possess; to every one of you, high and low, old and young, freemen as well as slaves; I enter a claim to you all as God's right, and not your own: and I would endeavour to bring you voluntarily to acknowledge his right, and by your own free act to surrender and devote yourselves to him, whose you are, and whom therefore you are bound to serve.

It is high time for me to assert, and for you to acknowledge, God's right to you; for have not many of you behaved as if you thought you were your own, and had no master or proprietor? Have you not practically said, with those insolent sinners, the psalmist mentions, *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Psa. xii. 4. for have you not refused to employ your tongues for the honour of God, and spoke what you pleased, without any control from his law? Have you not said by your practice, what Pharaoh was bold and plain enough to speak out in words, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Exod. v. 2. Have you not aimed at pleasing yourselves, as if you were not bound to please the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, whose authority confines the stubborn powers of hell in chains of everlasting darkness, and sets all the armies of heaven in motion to execute his sovereign orders? Have you not followed your own inclinations, as if you were at liberty to do what you pleased? Or if you have in some instances restrained yourselves, have not the restraints proceeded, not from a regard to his authority, but from a regard to your own pleasure or interest? Have you not

* The discourse is said by the author to be Sermons preparatory to the Lord's Supper.

used your bodies, your souls, your estates, and all your possessions, as if they were your own absolutely and independently, and there were no God on high, who has an original and superior claim to you, and all that you are and have? Do not your own consciences convict you of these things? Is it not then high time for you to be made sensible whose right you are? that you are not your own, but God's?

This reason would render this subject very seasonable at any time. But there is another reason which peculiarly determines me to make choice of it to day; and that is, the greatest business of this day is, to surrender and devote ourselves to God as his servants forever. In so solemn a posture as at the Lord's table, in so affecting an act as the commemoration of that death to which we owe all our hopes of life and happiness, and with such solemn emblems as those of bread and wine in our hands, which represent the broken body and flowing blood of Jesus, we are to yield ourselves to God, and seal our indenture to be his. This is the solemn business we are now entering upon. And that we may perform it the more heartily, it is fit we should be sensible that we are doing no more than what we are obliged to do; no more than what God has a right to require us to do, seeing we are not our own, but his.

The apostle speaks of it with an air of surprise and horror, that any under the profession of christianity should be so stupid as not to know and acknowledge that they are not their own, but God's. *What!* says he, *know ye not, that ye are not your own?* As if he had said, can you be ignorant in so plain a point as this? Or can you be so hardy, as knowing the truth, to practise contrary to knowing it? Knowing you are not your own, dare you act as if you were your own? Acknowledging that you are God's, dare you withhold from him his property? Will a man rob God? Shall not his professed servants serve him? Since your bodies and your souls are his, dare you use them as if they were absolutely your own, and refuse to glorify him with them?

The same claim, my brethren, is valid with regard to you, which the apostle here asserts with regard to the Corinthians. You are no more your own than they were; you are as much God's property as they were.

And his property in you depends upon such firm foundations as cannot be shaken without the loss of your being, and your relapse into nothing. If you made yourselves, you may call your-

selves your own. But you know the curious frames of your bodies were not formed by your hands, nor was it your feeble breath that inspired them with those immortal sparks of reason, your souls. A greater absurdity cannot be mentioned, than that a creature should be its own creator ; for then it must act before it had a being. You owe your being to a divine Original, the Fountain of all existence. It was Jehovah, the uncreated, all-creating Jehovah, who so wonderfully and fearfully formed your bodies, and who is likewise the Father of your spirits And what right can be more valid than that founded upon creation ? It is a right founded upon your very being, and which nothing but the entire loss of being can destroy. He that makes servants out of nothing, has he not a right to their service ? Did he form your souls and bodies, and may he not require you to glorify him with them ? Can you call them your own, or dare to dispose of them as you please, without any regard to God, when you would have had neither soul nor body, nor been any thing at all, if it had not been for him ? You think you have such a right to a thousand things as entitles you to the use of them ; but shew me one thing, if you can, to which you have such a right as God has to you, to your whole souls and bodies, to you, who have no master upon earth, and who are your own property in exclusion to all the claims of your fellow-creatures. Did you produce out of nothing any of those things you call yours ? No, you only bought them with money, or you formed them into what they are, out of materials already created to your hand. But it is Jehovah's right alone that is founded upon creation. And will you not acknowledge this right ? Will not your hearts declare even now, ' My Maker, God, this soul and this body are thine ; and to thee I cheerfully surrender them ? The work of thine own hands shall be thine by my free and full consent ; and I renounce all claim to myself that is not dependent upon and subordinate to thee.'

Again, the providence of God towards you has made you his absolute property ; and on this footing he claims your service. You could no more support yourselves in being, than you could give being to yourselves at first. Who but he has presarved you alive for so many months and years ; preserved you so frail and precarious, surrounded with so many dangers, and exposed to so many wants ? Whose earth have you trod upon ? Whose air have you breathed in ? Whose creatures have you fed upon ?

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, Ps. xxiv. 1. and consequently all the supports and enjoyments, all the necessaries and comforts of life are his. Show me the mercy, if you can, which you created. Mention the moment, if you can, in which you supported your own life, independently of the Almighty. Show me that property of yours, if you can, which is so independent upon you as you are upon him. This moment, if he should withdraw his supporting hand, you would instantaneously become as entirely nothing as you were ten thousand years ago. If he should now strip you of all that is his, and only leave you what is originally your own, he would leave you nothing at all. The earth, and all its productions, the air, the light, and your very being would be entirely vanished, and your place would be no more known in the creation. O ! that you knew, O ! that you felt, O ! that you practically acknowledged, how entirely you are dependent upon God ! And dare you call yourselves your own, when you cannot support yourselves in being or in happiness one moment ? O ! renounce so haughty a claim, and this day give up yourselves to God as his. A son honoureth his father : and since God is your Father, where is his honour ? The dull ox knows his owner, and the stupid ass knows his master's crib ; and will not you know and acknowledge your divine Benefactor and Preserver ? He has nourished and brought you up as his children, and dare you rebel against him ?

Thus you see the divine right to you may be made good upon the footing of creation and providence. But this is not the foundation of right which the apostle here has in view, or which I would chiefly insist upon. The ground of claim that he has here in view, is that of redemption by Jesus Christ ; *ye are not your own*, says he, *for ye are bought with a price*. This is a ground of claim still more endearing. You are God's, not only because he made you, because he preserved you, but because he hath bought you ; bought you, saith St. Peter, *not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. What an expensive purchase is this ! a purchase by blood ! not by the blood of bulls and of goats, not by the blood of man, but by the blood of Jesus, which St. Paul does not scruple to call the blood of God himself ; *the church of God*, says he, *which he has purchased with his own blood*. Acts xx. 28. This was the immense ransom ; this is what the apostle calls a price, by way of

eminence, in my text ; *ye are bought with a price* ; a price so vast and distinguishable, that it may easily be known without being particularly described ; every christian must know it, if he is but told that it is the price with which he was bought.

The words *buying*, *purchase*, *ransom*, *redemption*, and the like, occur so often in the account of our salvation by Christ, that they deserve a particular explication.

They are sometimes taken in a proper sense, and sometimes in an improper, in the sacred scriptures. I shall particularly consider the word *redeem*, which most frequently occurs, as a specimen of the rest.

To redeem in a lax improper sense, signifies in general, to deliver from oppression and misery, in whatever way the deliverance is effected, and not necessarily implying that it is effected by a proper payment of a price. So you very often read of the Israelites being redeemed from slavery in Egypt ; and on this account God assumed the title of their Redeemer. In this lax sense of the word we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ : redeemed, that is, delivered, from slavery to sin and Satan. Our freedom from sin is called redemption by Christ, in the sacred language. So in Tit. ii. 14, the apostle says, *Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* It is by Christ's freely giving himself a sacrifice for us, that the influences of the holy Spirit are procured to mortify our corrupt dispositions, and subdue the power of sin, and thus to free us from our sordid slavery to its usurped jurisdiction. Sin has still retained its power over fallen angels : through the space of at least near six thousand years, notwithstanding all the punishment they have already suffered for it, and notwithstanding all that they have seen of the wonders of divine Providence, and the amiable and tremendous displays of the divine perfections, they sin on, still impenitent and unreformed, and will do so forever. But many a sinner of the race of man has been recovered to a state of holiness and happiness, and been freed from the tyrannical dominion of sin. And the reason is, Jesus did not give himself for the fallen angels, but for the fallen sons of Adam ; for these, but not for the former, he purchased sanctifying grace ; and this makes the difference. While the former are hardened more and more in wickedness in the furnace of hell, the fallen offspring of Adam are purified by his Spirit, and made a peculiar people, a people distinguishable from all others by

their purity and zeal for good works, and peculiarly his above all others. St. Peter also uses the word *redeem*, in the same sense, to signify deliverance from sin. *Ye know*, says he, *that ye were redeemed from your vain conversation by the precious blood of Christ.* 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. This is a very glorious redemption indeed, much more illustrious than the deliverance of the Israelites from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian bondage; which is so often called redemption.

Again, Jesus Christ has redeemed; that is, delivered his people from the guilt of sin; and consequently from the wrath of God, and the punishments of hell. *He obtained eternal redemption for his people.* Heb. ix. 12. *Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. All the saints that are now in heaven, and all that shall be added to their happy number in all the future ages of the world, are indebted to him for their great, their everlasting deliverance. To Jesus they owe it, that they have the actual enjoyment of complete happiness, and the sure prospect of its everlasting continuance, instead of feeling the vengeance of eternal fire. To Jesus they owe it, that they rejoice forever in the smiles of divine love, instead of sinking under the frowns of divine indignation. To Jesus they owe it, that they enjoy the pleasures of an applauding conscience, instead of agonizing under the pangs of guilt, and the horrors of everlasting despair. To Jesus they owe it, that their voice is employed in songs of praise and triumph, instead of infernal groans and howlings. To Jesus they are indebted for all this; and they are very sensible of their obligations; and their everlasting anthems acknowledge it. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall hear them ere long, singing with a loud voice, *Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.* Rev. v. 9. *These are they which were redeemed from the earth, and from among men, as first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.*—Rev. xiv. 3, 4.

Thus you see that taking the word Redemption in a lax improper sense, as signifying deliverance, though without a price, that we may be said to be bought or redeemed by Jesus Christ. But if we take the word in a strict and proper sense, it signifies a particular kind of deliverance; namely, by the payment of a price. And it is in this way that Jesus redeemed his people. *He gave himself*, says St. Paul, *a ransom for all.* 1 Tim. ii. 6. And himself has told us, *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for*

many. Matt. xx. 28. Now a ransom is a price paid to redeem a thing that was forfeited, or a person that was held in captivity and slavery. So to redeem an estate, is to pay a price equivalent to it, and so to recover it. To redeem a prisoner or a captive, is to lay down a price as an equivalent for his liberty. In this sense Christ bought his people with a price, or redeemed them with his blood as the ransom. This will lead us to conceive of his work in our salvation in various views.

He is said to *redeem us to God by his blood*. Rev. v. 9. This implies that we were lost to God, because justice required we should be given up to punishment, and God could take no pleasure in us. We were lost to God, just as a criminal delivered up to justice is lost to his family and his country. But Jesus pays the ransom to divine justice with his own blood ; that is, he bears the punishment in his own person, which justice demanded of the sinner ; and hereupon, the poor, helpless, lost sinner is recovered to God, becomes his property again upon the footing of mercy, and recovers the divine favour which he had lost. The blessed God, as it were, recovers his lost creature, receives him with delight from the arrest of justice safe and unhurt, and rejoices over him as redeemed from eternal death. Now, like the father of the prodigal in the parable, he gives orders for public rejoicings, through all the heavenly court, saying, *It is meet we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found*. Luke xv. 32. And again, *I will save him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom*. Job xxxiii. 24. Again, Jesus is said to redeem us from the curse of the law : *God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*. Gal. iv. 4, 5. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. Gal. iii. 13. Here you see what he redeemed us from, namely, the curse of the law, the penalty threatened in the law to disobedience ; and also the manner in which he redeemed us, namely, by becoming a curse for us, or suffering the penalty in his own person which was due to us for disobedience. This representation supposes that the law of God has demands upon us, demands of punishment, and that it detains us as prisoners under arrest till these demands are answered by some adequate satisfaction. Now the Lord Jesus entered into our law-place, and by his sufferings made a satisfaction equivalent to the demands of the law : and it is this satisfaction that is called the ransom by

which he redeemed us. By his obedience and sufferings all the demands of the law are completely answered, so that now the prisoner is dismissed, the captive set free ; set free upon the footing of a ransom, or for and in consideration of full payment made. By this a way is opened for the salvation of sinners upon the plan of the gospel ; that is, by the righteousness of Jesus imputed to them upon their believing in him ; imputed to such as have no personal merit, but must sink into everlasting condemnation, if dealt with according to the rigour of the law. Thus Jesus is made to believers righteousness and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. righteousness to answer the precept of the law, and redemption from its penalty.

In short, our salvation is accomplished so much in the way of redemption, that this word, or one of the same sense, is very often used in the affair. Heaven is called a purchased* possession, Ephes. i. 14. because, when we had forfeited our right to it. it was purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Believers are called a peculiar, 1 Peter ii. 9. or as the word is sometimes rendered, a purchased † people. The resurrection is called the redemption of our body, Rom. viii. 23. because, after having been made a helpless captive under the power of death, and shut up in the prison of the grave, it is dismissed and set at liberty by Jesus Christ. And our salvation is called eternal redemption, because all the blessings contained therein are redeemed for us after they had been forfeited and lost.

Thus you see the death of Christ may be called the great price with which we are bought, and by which all spiritual and everlasting blessings were bought for us. As for believers, it is beyond all dispute that they have been thus dearly bought ; and on this account they are not their own, but God's. They are his on the footing of redemption ; and therefore he has the strongest claim to their service. O ! shall not those favoured creatures whom he has redeemed from hell, redeemed from sin and Satan, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, devote themselves to their Deliverer as his servants forever ? Can you bear the thought of withholding his own from him, when he redeemed you when lost, and purchased a right to you by the blood of his Son ? one drop of which is of more value than a thousand worlds !

A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.

* περιποιήσεως. † λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν.

Must not the love of Christ constrain you, as it did St. Paul, to judge thus : That if this illustrious personage *died for you, then you that live should no longer live to yourselves, but to him that died for you and rose again.* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Thus you see the argument concludes with full force as to believers, who are indisputably purchased by the blood of Christ. But will it conclude also as to those who are now unbelievers ? Were they so redeemed or bought by Jesus Christ that they are no longer their own but God's, and upon that footing obliged to devote themselves to him ? There is hardly any subject in divinity more intricate than the extent of Christ's redemption ; and it would by no means suit the present occasion, to perplex a practical discourse with this controversy. I shall therefore only lay down a few principles which are indisputable, and will fully answer my present design. (1.) As to those who believe that Christ laid down his life as a price for the redemption of every individual of mankind, the argument concludes with full force ; for by their own confession they are bought with a price, and therefore they are not their own, but God's. (2.) You all hope that Jesus Christ died for you ; unless you have this hope, you can have no hope at all of being saved according to the gospel ; for the gospel allows you no hopes of salvation at all, but upon the supposition of Christ's dying for you. Have you then any hope of salvation ? Undoubtedly you have ; for you do not look upon yourselves as shut up under remediless despair. Well then, just as much hope as you have of salvation, just so much hope you have that Christ died for you ; and consequently, upon your own principle, you are so far obliged to act as persons bought with a price, and therefore not your own, but God's, that is, as far as you hope for heaven, so far are you obliged to devote yourselves to God as his, and no longer to live to yourselves. And if you deny his claim to you upon the footing of redemption, you renounce all hope, and give yourselves over as lost and hopeless. And what can bind you more strongly than this ? Will you rather rush into despair, and fling yourselves headlong into ruin, than acknowledge God's right, and behave as those that are his, and not your own ? (3.) I venture to assert that Christ died for every man in such a sense, as to warrant all that hear the gospel to regard the offer of salvation by his death, as made to them without distinction ; and to oblige all indefinitely to embrace that offer, or to believe in him, and to conduct themselves towards him, as one that by his death

placed them under a dispensation of grace. Therefore all are obliged to behave towards him as their Redeemer, and to own that he has a right to them upon the footing of redemption. This is sufficient to my present purpose : for if this be the case, then I may enter a claim to you all, in the name of God, as his property : and you cannot refuse to resign yourselves to him without denying the Lord that bought you. He claims your souls and bodies as his due, and requires you to glorify him with both, upon the footing of redemption.

Here I am naturally led to consider the duty the apostle infers from these premises ; and that is, to glorify God. *Ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price ;* your souls and your bodies are God's ; *therefore glorify God with your souls and your bodies, which are his.* This is the connection of the apostle's reasoning.

Here you are ready to inquire, What is it to glorify God with our souls and bodies ? I answer in short, The connection intimates that it consists in using our souls and bodies, and all that we are and possess, not as our own, but as his ; that is, that we serve him with all the powers of both. We should consider our understandings as his, and therefore employ them to think of him and know him : our wills as his, and therefore choose him : our love, our desire, our joy as his, and therefore love, desire, and rejoice in him above all : our sorrow, our indignation, and all the various forms of our irascible passions as his, and therefore level them against his enemies, particularly against sin : our consciences as his, and therefore regard them as his deputies ; our powers of action as his, and therefore to be governed by his authority. We should consider our whole souls as his, and therefore not willingly harbour any thing in them that may displease him ; no chosen darkness, vanity, or error in the mind : no enmity, no coldness, or lukewarmness in the heart. We should love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength ; because our hearts, our souls, our minds, and strength are his ; his, and not our own. So also our bodies are his, and therefore all our members should be instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Your eyes are his, therefore let them glorify him by viewing the wonders of his word and works. Your ears are his, therefore let them hear his voice. Your tongues are his, therefore use them as instruments of praise, and of making known his glory. In short, you are all entirely his, therefore be all entirely devoted to him. You are his ser-

vants, even when you are serving yourselves ; therefore whatsoever ye do, even in your own affairs, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not to men. This is to *glorify God with your souls and bodies which are his.* And this should be your universal practice in all your actions ; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether you live, you should live to the Lord : and whether you die, you should die to the Lord : that living and dying you may be the Lord's.* Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

You have now had a brief view of those grounds upon which Jehovah claims you as his, and of the duty resulting from this claim. And what remains but that I wind up the whole with a serious, plain, warm proposal to your hearts ? And that is, whether you will this day practically acknowledge God's right in you, by devoting yourselves entirely to him ? Will you, or will you not ? Pause, and think upon the proposal. Perhaps you may be willing to comply without any further excitements. If not, come and let us reason the matter together.

Consider how entirely, and how long you have unjustly detained his own property from God. Have you not lived to yourselves, and not to him ? Have you not used the faculties of your souls, and the members of your bodies, your time, your estates, and your all, as if he had no right in them, but they were entirely your own ? Has not *self* been the ruling principle in you, as if you had no Master in heaven ; or as if no blood had been shed upon mount Calvary to purchase a superior right in you ? You have thought your own thoughts, spoke your own words, consulted your own pleasure, and followed your own will ; as if you usurped the disposal of yourselves, and did not acknowledge a superior. When were your thoughts, your words, your time, your powers of action, devoted to the Lord that bought you ? The patience of God has lent some of you many days and years, but which of them have you used for his glory ? And is it not high time for you now to return to your rightful Master, and to *render to God the things that are God's ?*

Again, Consider, that while you have thus lived to yourselves, you have most unjustly usurped a right to what was not your own. Did you make yourselves ? Did you redeem yourselves ? Have you preserved yourselves ? Is it you that gave the least virtue to the food to nourish you ? Can you enable the earth to support you, or the air to heave your lungs with the

breath of life? Can you recover yourselves when sick, or revive yourselves when dying? Can you make yourselves happy in the world of spirits, and provide for yourselves through an immortal duration? If you can do these things, you may set up for independency with a better grace, and call yourselves your own; and you may boldly lift up your faces to heaven, and tell the Sovereign of the universe, you will not be obliged to him, but he may take away from you all that is his, and leave you to shift for yourselves. But are you not struck with horror at such claims as these? You must then acknowledge you are not your own. And what aggravated sacrilege have you been guilty of, in robbing God of his right! If he that robs you of a little money is punished with death for the crime, what do you deserve who have robbed God of your souls and bodies, and that all your life long? O! will you not this day restore him his own? He will accept it again, when freely restored, though abused, dishonoured, and rendered unfit for service by you.

Farther, If you will not give up yourselves to God, pray what will you do with yourselves? You are not capable of self-subsistence, or independency. A new-born, naked, helpless infant may as well refuse the breast, reject the mother's care, and set up for itself, as you pretend to shift for yourselves independently of the God that made you, and the Saviour that redeemed you. Alas! if you separate yourselves from him, you are like a stream separated from its fountain, that must run dry; a spark separated from the fire, that must expire; a member cut off from the body, that must die and putrify. If you will not give up yourselves to God, whom will you choose for your patron? Will you yield yourselves to sin and Satan? Alas! that is but to submit to a merciless tyrant, who will employ you in sordid, cruel drudgery, and then reward you with death and destruction. Will you give up yourselves to the world, to riches, honours, and pleasures? Alas! what service can the world do you when it is laid in ashes by the universal flames of the last conflagration? What service can the world do you when your unwilling souls are torn away from it, and must leave all its enjoyments forever and ever? Will not the God of grace prove a better Master to you? Has he ever forsaken any of his servants in their last extremity? No; he has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Heb. xiii 5. And the long train of his servants, through thousands of years, bear an

united testimony, that they have always found him faithful to his promise. And why then will you not choose him for your Master? Alas! if you refuse, you become what I may call the lumber and rubbish of the universe; useless to yourselves, and lost to God and your fellow-creatures, a property not worth wning. While you call yourselves your own, you degrade yourselves, and lose all your dignity and importance; you cut yourselves off from all happiness, and can expect no other heaven than what such guilty, helpless creatures as you can create for yourselves. If you will not voluntarily surrender yourselves to God, he will not own you as his, but leave you to yourselves, to shift for yourselves as you can. *He will hide his face from you, according to his threatening, that he may see what will be your end.* Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. And O! what wretched outcasts, what poor, helpless orphans will you then be!

Let me farther try whether you have the least spark of gratitude still remaining in you. Has the love of Jesus no sweetly constraining force upon you? Can you look upon him dying for you on the cross, and yet keep him out of his right? Can you view him paying your ransom with his blood and life, and yet refuse to give him up what he has redeemed at so high a price? Shall poor captives, redeemed from sin and hell with the blood of Jesus, rather continue still in bondage than submit to so good a Master? Are you capable of such base ingratitude? Can you treat your kind Redeemer so unkindly?

Let me conclude this exhortation with the more forcible, though plain and artless language of another.* *Consider when judgment comes, inquiry will be made, whether you have lived as your own, or as his that bought you. Then he will require his own with improvement.* Luke xix. 23. "The great business of that day will not be so much to search after particular sins or duties, which were contrary to the scope of heart and life, but whether you lived to God, or to your flesh; and whether your time and care and wealth were expended for Christ in his members and interest, or for your carnal selves? You, that Christ hath given authority to, shall then be accountable, whether you improved it to his advantage. You that he hath given honour to, must then give account whether you improved it to his honour. In the fear of God, Sirs, cast up your accounts in time, and bethink you what

* Mr. Baxter's Practical Works, Vol. iv. p. 714, 715.

answer will then stand good. It will be a doleful hearing to a guilty soul, when Christ shall say, I gave thee thirty or forty years time ; thy flesh had so much in eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and labouring ; in idleness and vain talking, and recreations, and other vanities ; but where was my part ? How much was laid out for promoting my glory ? I lent you much of the wealth of the world : so much was spent in provisions for your backs and bellies ; so much on costly toys, or superfluities ; so much in revengeful suits and contentions : and so much was left behind for your posterity ; but where was my part ? How much was laid out for the furtherance of the gospel, or to relieve the souls or bodies of your brethren ? I gave thee a family, and committed them to thy care to govern them for me ; but how didst thou perform it ? O ! brethren, bethink you in time what answer to make to such questions. Your Judge hath told you that your doom must then pass according as you have improved your talents for him ; and that he that hideth his talent, though he give God his own, *shall be cast into utter darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Matt. xxv. 30. How easily will Christ then evince his right in you, and convince you that it was your duty to have lived to him ? Do you think, Sirs, that you shall then have the face to say, I thought, Lord, I had been made and redeemed for myself ? I thought I had nothing to do on earth but live in as much plenty as I could, and pleasure to myself, and serve thee on the by, that thou mightest continue my prosperity, and save me when I could keep the world no longer ; I knew not that I was thine, and should have lived to thy glory ? —If any of you plead thus, what store of arguments hath Christ to silence you ! He will then convince you that his title to you was not questionable. He will prove that thou wast his by thy very being, and fetch unanswerable arguments from every part and faculty ; he will prove it from his incarnation, his life of humiliation, his bloody sweat, his crown of thorns, his cross, his grave : he that had wounds to shew, after his resurrection, for the satisfaction of a doubting disciple, will have such scars to shew then, as shall suffice to convince a self-excusing rebel : all these shall witness that he was thy rightful Lord.

And now, my brethren, may I not presume that I have carried my point, if I had only to do with your reason ? Does not your reason plead in favour of resigning yourselves to God this day ? Take notice, I again proclaim God's right in you. Can any of

you deny this claim ? Certainly you dare not. Well then, let heaven and earth bear witness, that you were all claimed this day as God's property upon the footing of redemption ; and not one of you dared to deny it. Therefore, *render to God the things that are God's.* May I hope you now feel your hearts beginning to yield ? I make the proposal to you all ; to you, masters and freemen, as well as to you slaves : shall we all this day, with one consent, devote ourselves to God as his servants ? Will you allow me, as it were, to draw up your indenture, and speak for you ? I hope I am willing to lead the way, and will you follow me ? Methinks I hear you say, 'Yes, we are willing : after many struggles and reluctances, we are at length willing, and can hold out no longer. But hold ! I am afraid some of you know not what you are going about. And if you rashly and inconsiderately engage in the service, you will soon desert it. As soon as the force of persuasion has ceased, and the flow of passion is over, you will retract all. Therefore I must put you back, till I inform you of some things with relation to this contract, that you may make sure work, an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten.

Take notice then, 1. Your resignation of yourselves must not be the act of mere nature, without much greater assistance ; but you must be urged and sweetly constrained to it by the holy Spirit making you willing by his power. Whatever professions you may make, whatever external forms of self-dedication you may force yourselves to use, yet your hearts are by no means willing ; nay, they are utterly averse to this surrender, till they are changed by divine grace. This, indeed, should not discourage you from making the attempt : for it is while you are making the attempt, you are to hope for the assistance of divine grace. But I mention the necessity of divine power, lest you should mistake the efforts of mere nature under the constraints of persuasion, or in a warm fit of passion, for an hearty voluntary surrender of yourselves to God. The same thing is to be applied to your future performance of your engagement. As you cannot, of yourselves, rightly devote yourselves to God, neither will you be able, of yourselves, to perform your vow. Therefore be humble and self-diffident in this transaction. Entertain no sanguine expectations from yourselves, or you will be surely disappointed. Trust in divine strength for all, for that alone is sufficient for you.

2. Your resignation must be unreserved and universal. God claims your all ; Jesus bought all ; your souls and bodies, and whatever belongs to you, and therefore you must give him all. He will not share his property with sin and Satan : you must make no reserve of this or that favourite lust or interest, but part with all that is inconsistent with your duty to him : and you must give up what is dearest to you to your heavenly Master, to be disposed of as he shall think proper. Here pause, and inquire whether you are willing to be unreserved and universal in your surrender ?

3. You must resign yourselves to God at all adventures, resolving to be his, whatever your attachment to him may cost you ; though it should cost you your reputation among men, a part, or even the whole of your estate ; nay, though it should cost you your life. Blessed be God, we are now in such happy circumstances, that our duty to him is not likely to do us much injury, even in this world, where persecution and tribulation is the usual lot of his servants. Resignation to him may indeed expose you to a senseless laugh or a sneer, to reviling and calumny ; but who that has the spirit of a man within him, would be so meanly complaisant as to offend his God, and lose his heaven, in order to shun the ridicule and contempt of fools ? Fools they are, if tried by the standard of true wisdom, however wise they may be in other respects. This is but a slight kind of persecution to one that makes a proper estimate of things, which cannot so much as make a finger ache, or raise the skin into a moment's pain. But times may yet change with us. The day may yet come, when the servants of Christ among us may be called to forsake *father and mother, and wife and children, and lands, and even to lay down their lives, for the sake of Christ.* This would be no unusual event : the servants of the crucified Jesus have been a company of cross-bearers, if I may so call them, from age to age ; and their religion has cost them dear in the estimate of the world, though they are always immense gainers by it in the issue. This persecution, even to death, therefore, you may perhaps meet with, and it is proper you should insert this article into the contract, that you will part with life for Christ's sake. Perhaps your indulgent Master may not insist upon it, and yet perhaps he may : it is therefore necessary you should consent to it. And what do you think of it ? Does not this article cause some of you to draw back ? Let me add,

4. Your dedication of yourselves must be fixed and habitual. It is not a formality to be performed only at a sacramental occasion, nor a warm transient purpose under a sermon, or in a transport of passion; but it must be the steady, uniform, persevering disposition of your souls to be the Lord's at all times, and in all circumstances, in life, in death, and through all eternity.

These, brethren, are the qualifications of an acceptable surrender of yourselves to God; and are you willing to be his upon these terms? Or will you refuse and perish? Deliberate upon the matter, and come to some conclusion. *Choose ye, in this day, whom ye will serve.* May I hope you answer me to this purpose: 'We have weighed the case impartially; we see difficulties before us, if we become the Lord's servants; but notwithstanding these difficulties, we are resolved upon it: his we will be who bought us with his blood?' Is this your determinate resolution, my dear brethren? Then make the transaction as solemn and explicit as you can, and follow me; I say, let all, white and black, old and young, follow me, while I speak for you; 'Lord, here is a poor sinner, thy creature, redeemed by the blood of thy Son, that has long been a slave to other masters, and withheld from thee thy just and dear-bought property; here, Lord, I would now, freely and without reserve, devote and surrender myself, my soul and body, and my all to thee, to be universally and forever thine. And let the omnipotent God, let angels and men, be witness to the engagement.'

Do you, my dear brethren, heartily consent to this formula? Then the contract is ready for sealing; therefore let us rise and crowd round the table of our Lord, and there annex our solemn seals, and acknowledge it as our act and deed. O! happy day! if we should be prepared to use this sacred ordinance for this purpose! Come, ye servants of the Lord, take a refreshment to strengthen you for your Master's work. Come, ye redeemed slaves, commemorate the price of your redemption. Come, see how your Master loved you, and how much he suffered for you: and O! let his love constrain you to live not to yourselves, but to him that died for you, and rose again; rose again to plead your cause, and prepare a place for you in heaven, the region of immortal life and glory!

But if any of you refuse to comply with the proposal, or, which is much the same, are careless and indifferent about giving yourselves up to God, not forming any express determina-

tion one way or other, heaven and earth will bear witness against you, that your refusal is not owing to your not knowing God's claim upon you. I have asserted it this day, in the presence of God and his people ; and if you still refuse to acknowledge it, I denounce unto you, that you shall surely perish, shall perish by the hand of divine justice, as wilful rebels against the highest authority, and as insolently and ungratefully *denying the Lord that bought them.* Think on your dreadful doom, and let your hearts meditate terror, till you be delivered from it by a voluntary surrender of yourselves to God, through Jesus Christ, your Redeemer. And now what account could such of you as have refused your compliance, give of the transactions of this day, even to one of your fellow-creatures ? Suppose one should ask you upon your return home, 'What were you doing to-day ?' You must answer, 'I was engaged in a treaty with the Proprietor of the universe, and the Redeemer that bought me with his blood, about becoming his servant, and acknowledging his right in me.'—'Well, and what was the issue ? Certainly you did not dare to refuse ? Certainly you are now the willing servant of God.'—'No, I refused, and so the treaty broke up.'—O thou monster ! Could you bear the dreadful narrative ? Would not every one that heard it gaze and stare at you with horror, and ask in consternation, 'Were you not afraid ? Had you no regard for your own welfare ? Alas ! what will you do with yourself now ? What rock or mountain can you find to hide your devoted head ? How will you answer for your refusal in the great and terrible day of the Lord ?'

Sermon 32.

THE CHRISTIAN FEAST.

1 COR. *v.* 8.—*Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

AS we have the agreeable prospect of celebrating the Lord's supper on the next Lord's day, we cannot spend this day to better purpose than preparing for it. And no preparative can be of more importance than a right knowledge of the end and design

of that solemn ordinance, and the qualifications necessary in those that would worthily partake of it. To this I would devote the present discourse : and so important a design certainly demands the attention of all, especially of such of you as intend to join in the participation of the sacred supper.

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude, yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel-dispensation which the passover had under the law. St. Paul had very naturally glided into the style of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in the directions he had been giving concerning a scandalous member of the Corinthian church : and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to speak of the gospel dispensation, and particularly of the Lord's supper. He had directed the church of Corinth to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole society. Wickedness is of a spreading infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one instance may occasion extensive mischief ; for, says he, *Know ye not that leaven* ferments and diffuses itself, till at length it has *leavened the whole lump ?* Just so one corrupt member in a church may spread a contagion through the whole. *Therefore purge out the old leaven ;* cast out this scandalous offender, and labour also to purge your church and your own hearts from all corruption, that ye may be as a new, solid, and pure lamp : for ye are more strongly bound to keep yourselves morally pure, and to guard your church against infection, than the Jews were to abstain from all things mixed with leaven at the feast of the passover ; for though that feast is no more to be observed, yet that which was signified by the paschal Lamb is now come to pass ; *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*, and the ordinance of his supper is appointed as a sacred feast, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him, as the passover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, and the destroying angel. And this is a stronger reason for the more purity of particular persons and congregations under the gospel, than there could be for ceremonial purity under the law. *Therefore*, says he, *let us keep this evangelical feast, not with old leaven*, not with those corrupt dispositions which we once indulged, and which, like leaven, soured our nature, and fermented through our

frame: *neither with the leaven of malice, or any kind of wickedness;* but renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts universally sanctified, and full of love and good will to all mankind, let us religiously celebrate this gospel feast with those dispositions which were signified by the unleavened bread, namely, *sincerity and truth.*

It was the practice of the Jews, when the passover was approaching, to search every corner of their houses with lighted candles, that they might be sure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The apostle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts christians to a like care in searching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure, and fit for partaking of so holy an ordinance.

My design is to show you the principal ends of the institution of the Lord's supper: and as I go along, to delineate the character of those who are fit to attend upon it; for by knowing the former, we may easily know the latter.

The Lord's supper partakes of the general nature of those divine institutions which are called sacraments: in this, "That it is intended to represent things spiritual by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas, and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood." As we have not only rational minds, but also animal bodies endowed with senses, God has wisely adapted his institutions to the make of human nature, and called in the assistance of our eyes* and our ears to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind; God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of religion. The tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant; a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with Noah, that the world should no more perish by a deluge; and we have not only the assurance of the divine promise, but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes by beholding that illustrious sign in the clouds. Circumcision and the passover were noted sacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewish dispensation; and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are

* Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus. HOR.

appointed in their room, and answer the like ends under the gospel. In all these ordinances God consults our weakness, and, as I observed, makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of representing and confirming things by sensible signs and significant actions is so natural and expressive, that men have used it in all ages in their transactions with one another. It was remarkably in use among the ancients; and it is not quite laid aside in our age, which does not abound in such methods of representation. In our age and country it is usual to confirm contracts by annexing seals to an instrument of writing; to confirm an agreement by shaking hands; to signify love by a kiss, and complaisance by bowing; and we sometimes give some token as a memorial to a parting friend I mention these low and familiar instances that I may, if possible, give some just ideas of a sacrament to the meanest capacity. It partakes of the general nature of these significant signs and actions, and is intended, like them, to strike our senses; and through that medium to instruct or affect our minds: and such a sign, such a seal, such a significant action is the Lord's supper in particular.

Having made this remark upon its general nature, I now go on to shew the particular ends of its institution. And,

I This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.

That this is its immediate and principal design we learn from the words of the blessed Jesus at its first institution. *This do in remembrance of me.* That we are to remember him particularly and principally as suffering for our sins, is evident from his words in distributing the elements, *This is my body which is broken for you.* Here a moving emphasis is laid upon his body's being broken; broken, crushed, and mangled with an endless variety of sufferings. So again, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.* Hence it is evident this ordinance was appointed as a memorial of a suffering Saviour; and it is under this notion that we are particularly to remember him. We are to *shew forth the Lord's death*, says the apostle; his death which was the consummation of his sufferings, *till he come again* to visit our world in a very different and glorious manner.

The Lord's supper in this view is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends, that whenever they see it they may remember him. Our Lord

knew we should be very apt to forget him ; and therefore, that the memory of his sufferings might never be lost, he instituted this ordinance ; and by the humble elements of bread and wine, he represents himself to our senses as broken under the burden of his sufferings, and shedding his blood. Corn, out of which bread is made, which is first threshed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven, is a very proper emblem to signify the violences which our Lord's sacred body endured ; and wine pressed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a striking representation of his blood, which was forced from him by the crushing weight of his agonies. Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing these elements to be the memorials of his sufferings.

This remembrance of a suffering Saviour must be attended with suitable affections. To remember him with a careless indifferency, or with contempt, is the most ungrateful insult. Were he an insignificant person, in whom we have no concern, we might treat him thus ; but thus to treat the beloved Son of God, and our only Saviour, thus to requite all his love and sufferings for us, what can be more shocking ? What can be more base ingratitude ? We should therefore remember him in this ordinance with a penitent sense of our sins, which were the causes of his death ; with an ardent love and gratitude for his dying love to us ; with an humble faith and confidence in the merit of his death, to procure us acceptance with God ; and with a voluntary dedication of ourselves to him and his service forever.

And hence you may learn the character of those who are prepared to communicate in this feast. They, and only they, are prepared, who are true penitents, fully convinced of their sins, and deeply sensible of their malignity, especially as the causes of his death, and thoroughly determined to forsake them ; who are lovers of a crucified Jesus, and feel their hearts fired with gratitude to him for all his love ; who are sensible that they have no personal righteousness, and therefore place all their dependence upon his only ; who feel his love constraining them, and are determined to *live no more to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.*

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. *Let a man examine himself*, says the apostle, *and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup.* Therefore, my brethren, inquire

whether this be your character; if it be not, you have no right to this privilege. It is a shocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of Christ without love to him, or penitential sorrows for those sins for which he died. Memorials of friendship and love-tokens are only for friends; and when others use them, it is mere farce and hypocrisy. Therefore till you have these dispositions, do not adventure to come to his table.

II. The Lord's supper was appointed as a badge of our christian profession, and of our being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is appointed for our initiation into the christian church at our first assuming the christian profession: and by partaking of this ordinance of the Lord's supper, we declare our constancy in that profession, and that we do not repent of our choice, nor desire to change our Master. We openly profess that we are not ashamed of the cross, or the religion of the despised Nazarene, but publicly avow our relation to him before the world. This perhaps may be intended by that expression of St. Paul, *shewing forth the Lord's death.* We shew, profess, and publish to all the world the regard we have even to his ignominious death. We may look upon this ordinance as an oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ. And hence probably it was first called [*sacramentum*] a sacrament; which properly signifies an oath * and particularly that kind of oath which the Roman soldiers took to their generals, in which they engaged to be faithful to their leaders, and to fight for their country, and never desert its cause.

To this practice probably St. Augustine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addresses them thus: 'Ye know, my beloved, that the soldiers of this world, who receive but temporal rewards from temporal masters, do first bind themselves by military sacraments or oaths, and profess that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more then ought the soldiers of the eternal King, who shall receive eternal rewards, to bind themselves with the heavenly sacraments or oaths, and publicly profess their fidelity to him!'†

* So Horace uses it;

——Non ego perfidum
Dixi Sacramentum.

† Notum est, Dilectissimi, charitati vestræ quod milites seculi beneficia temporalia a temporalibus Dominis accepturi, prius Sacramentis militaribus obligantur, & Dominis suis fidem se servaturos professi sunt: quanto magis ergo æterno Regi militaturi, & æterna præmia percepturi, debent Sacramentis cœlestibus obligari, & fidem per quam ei placituri sunt, publice profiteri? AUGUST. Oper. Tom. x. p. 984.

Now if we receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in this view, we assume a badge or mark of distinction from the rest of the world, and openly profess ourselves his disciples. We take a solemn oath of allegiance to him, and swear that we will be his faithful servants and soldiers to the end of life.

This shews the peculiar propriety of this ordinance as following upon baptism, especially with regard to those that were baptized in infancy, as we have generally been. In baptism our parents offered us up to God as his servants, and members of the christian church, before we were capable of personal choice, or doing any thing for ourselves; and when we arrive to years of discretion, it is expected we should approve of what they did, by our own personal act. Now the Lord's supper is an institution in which we may make their act our own, and acknowledge that we may stand to the contract they made for us. And as often as we partake of it, so often we make this profession. And hence by the way, you may see that such who neglect this ordinance when they are grown up to a capacity of acting for themselves, do virtually renounce their baptism, and disown the act of their parents in devoting them to God. Their parents were to act for them no longer than while they were incapable to act for themselves; and now when they are arrived at that age, and refuse to confirm the act of their parents, they practically disown it, and wilfully make heathens of themselves: and consequently they proclaim themselves rebels against Christ; for what but rebels are we to account such who refuse the oath of allegiance when tendered to them, and that over and over?

From hence you may learn another qualification of an acceptable communicant, namely, an hearty willingness to renounce his lusts and pleasures, and every sin, and to become universally and eternally the devoted servant and disciple of Jesus Christ. Here again examine yourselves whether you have this qualification.

III. We may consider this ordinance of the Lord's supper as a seal of the covenant of grace, both upon God's part and upon ours.

Every sacramental institution seems to partake of the general nature of a seal; that is, it is a sensible sign for the confirmation of a covenant or contract. This St. Paul expressly asserts, with regard to circumcision, when he says, that *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.* Rom. iv.

11. And Christ asserts the same thing concerning the ordinance now under consideration: *This cup*, says he, *is the New Testament*, or covenant *in my blood*; that is, it is a ratifying sign or seal of the covenant of grace, which is founded in my blood.

That you may rightly understand this, you must observe that God has cast his dispensation towards our guilty world into the form of a covenant, or contract, in which God and man are the parties, and Christ is the Mediator between them. The tenor of the covenant on God's part is to this purpose, 'That he will graciously bestow for the sake of Christ, pardon of sin, eternal life, and all the blessings of his purchase, upon all such sinners of the race of man as comply with the terms on which these blessings are offered.' The tenor or terms upon our part are to this purpose, 'That we receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as our only Saviour and Lord; or, in other words, that we believe in him with all our hearts, and repent of our sins, and devote ourselves to his service.' This is the substance of that happy contract: and of this the Lord's supper is a seal, as to both parties.

On God's part this covenant can receive no intrinsic confirmation. He has plainly declared it in his word; and no oaths or confirming signs can add any intrinsic certainty to his declaration. We say, 'an honest man's word is as good as his oath, or bond and seal;' and surely we may apply this in the highest sense to the declarations of eternal truth. But though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itself on God's part, yet the evidence of its certainty may be made more sensible and affecting to poor creatures that are so slow of heart to believe. And hence God has been pleased, in condescension to our weakness, to confirm it with the most solemn oaths and sacramental signs. This institution, in particular, is a standing evidence, obvious to our senses, in all the ages of the christian church, that he is unchangeably willing to stand to the articles on his part; that he is as ready to give his Son and all his blessings to such as believe, as he is to give bread and wine as signs and seals of them.

As to our part in receiving these elements, we signify our hearty consent to the covenant of grace, and, as it were, set our seal to it to confirm it. The language of that speaking action is to this purpose; 'I cordially agree to the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel; and in token

thereof I hereto affix my seal. As I take this bread and wine before many witnesses, so I openly and avowedly take and receive the Lord Jesus as my only Saviour and Lord, and the food and life of my soul: I cheerfully receive the offer of salvation according to the terms proposed in the gospel; of which let this bread and wine given and received be a token, or pledge, and seal.'

This, my brethren, is the meaning of this solemn action. And hence you may know whether you are qualified to join in it. If you have not heartily consented to the contract, it is the greatest absurdity and dissimulation to set your seal to it. What! will you, as it were, annex your hand and seal to a bargain that you do not agree to? Can you dare thus to be trifling with an heart-searching, all-knowing God? But, if divine grace has powerfully engaged your hearts to consent to this agreement, come with humble boldness, and attest and seal it before men and angels. And remember, for your comfort, that on God's part it always stands firm and unalterable. You have his word, his hand-writing, his oath, his seal, to confirm your faith; and what can you desire more to give you strong consolation?

IV. This ordinance of the Lord's supper was intended for the saints to hold communion together.

By the communion of saints, I mean that mutual love and charity, that reciprocal acknowledgment of each other, that brotherly intercourse and fellowship, which should be cultivated among them as children of the same father, in the same family, and as members of the same society, or mystical body. This is a thing of so much importance, that it is an article of the common creed of the christian church.

Our sitting down at the same table, partaking of the same elements, and commemorating the same Lord, are very expressive of this communion, and have a natural tendency to cultivate and cherish it. In such a posture we look like children of one family, fed at the same table upon the same spiritual provisions. It is a significant expression, that we are one in heart and affection; that we have one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, one God and Father of all; and that we acknowledge one another as brethren and fellow-chrsitians.*

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* The ἀγάπαι, or love feasts, among the primitive christians, were intended still farther to express this brotherly love and communion; but as the practice was at length abused, it was laid aside.

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and justly called the communion. And St. Paul assures us it deserves the name, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* that is, Is it not a token and pledge of our joint share and communion in the blessings purchased by his blood? *The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* that is, Is it not a sign of our common right to the happy effects of the sufferings of his body? *For*, says he, *we being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread:* that is, 'As many grains make but one loaf of bread, and as many members make but one body, so we, being many, are, as it were, but one bread, and one sacred body politic, of which Christ is the head, and our partaking together of one bread in the Lord's Supper, is a sign and pledge of this union.' This appears still clearer from the design of the apostle in these verses, which was to caution the Corinthians against partaking with heathens in those religious feasts, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols, after they had offered their sacrifice. This he represents as idolatrous. *My dearly beloved*, says he, *flee from idolatry.* ver. 14. And then, to convince them that in communicating with idolaters in these feasts they really joined with them in their idolatry, he argues from the nature of the Lord's Supper, which is also a feast upon sacrifice. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* So by joining with idolaters in these religious entertainments, we hold communion with them in their idolatry. He illustrates the same thing from the feasts upon sacrifice among the Jews, ver. 18.

Hence you may learn another qualification for this ordinance, namely, love and charity to all mankind, and especially to our fellow-communicants. To sit down at this feast of love with an heart possessed with angry and malicious passions, is certainly an aggravated wickedness. To this we may accommodate the words of Christ, though spoken before the institution of this ordinance. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Matt. v. 23, 24.

Hence also you may learn that none but such as make a credible profession of the christian religion have a right to this ordinance. If it be a sign of the communion of saints, and if we

should love our fellow-communicants as saints, then it follows that they should give us some ground for this charity, and that they should, as far as we can judge, be real saints or true christians. Their being such in reality is necessary to give them a right in the sight of God; and their appearing such, in a judgment of charity, is necessary to give them a right in the sight of the visible church, which can only judge of an outward visible profession; therefore such ought not to be admitted, however strenuously they insist that they are christians, whose gross ignorance, or wrong notions of religion, or whose immoral and irreligious practices leave no ground for a rational charity to hope that they are true christians. How can we cultivate the communion of saints with such who do not so much as appear to be saints? To have been baptized, to call themselves christians, and to attend upon the worship of the christian church, and the like, is far from being sufficient to constitute a credible profession; for all this a man may do, and yet be farther from practical christianity than an heathen. But a man must profess and act habitually in some measure as a christian, before he can justly be looked upon as a christian. Alas! the number of christians in our land are generally of a very different character! They may call themselves christians, as you or I may call ourselves kings or lords; but the profession is ridiculous; and that charity is under no rational or scriptural limitations that can communicate with them as fellow-christians.

V. In this ordinance God maintains communion with his people, and they with him.

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind than the former; and it is often mentioned in scripture as the privilege of the people of God. *Our fellowship*, says St. John, *is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 John i. 3. *The communion of the Holy Ghost* is a part of the apostolical benediction, which we also use at the close of our religious assemblies.

This communion consists partly in that intercourse which is carried on between God and his people, partly in the community of property, and partly in the interchange of property. There is a spiritual intercourse carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before

him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls ; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship. Hence he is said to dwell in them, and to walk in them ; 2 Cor vi. 16. *And our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which he resides.* 1 Cor. vi. 19. Christ speaks of this mutual intercourse in the strongest terms ; *If a man love me, my Father will love him, and I will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. There is also a kind of community of goods between Christ and his people. They are children of the same Father, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren ; they are joint heirs of the same inheritance. They have a fellowship in his sufferings, Phil. iii. 10. and are sharers in the glory and bliss of his resurrection and exaltation. The relation between them is often represented by that between husband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apostle argues, that *if we are Christ's, then all things are ours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21 *ad fin.* There is also an happy interchange of property between Christ and his people : happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their sin upon him, and they have his righteousness in exchange. He endured the death they had incurred, and they enjoy the life he obtained. He assumed the curse due to them, and they have the blessing transferred to them which was due to him. Here again the conjugal relation may be a proper illustration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her husband, and he is answerable for her debts and obligations, so Christ made himself answerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and justice of God ; and they are entitled to all the blessings he has purchased. O what a gracious and advantageous exchange is this for us !

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a suitable mean to cultivate it.* It is the place where Christ and his people meet, and have their interviews. He, the great Master of the feast, feeds them at his own table, upon his own provisions, in his own house, and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him ; and thus it is a social

* The apostle illustrates this point in 1 Cor. x. where he cautions the Corinthians against joining with idolaters in their religious festivals, because they could not do it without holding communion with those dæmons in honour of whom they were celebrated. His argument is to this purpose ; " That as in the Lord's Supper, we hold communion with Christ, and as the Jews, in their sacred feasts, communicated with God at his altar, so, in these idolatrous feasts, they held a religious communion with the idol." And this supposes that in the Lord's supper, we really have communion with Christ. See ver. 20, 21.

entertainment between them. There he favours them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him ; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all the blessings purchased by his sufferings ; and they receive them with eager desire : they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them. There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title good. There is a solemn exchange made between them of guilt for righteousness, of misery for happiness, of the curse for a blessing, of life for death. Christ takes the evils upon himself, and they cast them off themselves upon him ; and he makes over the blessings to them, and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, and, as it were, sitting down together at one table, like husband and wife, or parent and children, is a very proper emblem and representation. And I doubt not but some of you, upon such occasions, have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you an high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design, than is in the power of any language to afford.

Here again you may learn one important preparative for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper ; and that is, reconciliation to God, and a delight in communion with him. You cannot walk together, or maintain fellowship with him, till you are agreed, and take pleasure in his society ; therefore carefully inquire into this point.

Having thus shewn you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark, 'That it is evident from all 'that has been said, that persons who live vicious and irreligious 'lives, whatever their profession be, have no right to this ordi-'nance, and should not be admitted to it by the officers of the 'church, till they profess their repentance and reformation.' When we exclude such, we are not taking too much upon us, nor pretending to judge of what we have nothing to do with ; but we only exercise that power which is inherent in every society, and with which Christ has expressly invested his church. Every society has a power to exclude those from its peculiar privileges, who violate the essential and fundamental laws of its constitution.

And no law can be so essential to any constitution, as a life of holiness is to the character of a christian, and the constitution of the christian church. It is no matter what persons profess with their lips, it is the life that is to be regarded as the decisive evidence. What would it signify for a man to insist upon it that he was honest, if he persisted in theft and robbery; or to take the oaths of allegiance, when his conduct was a course of rebellion against his sovereign? And equally insignificant and absurd is a profession of christianity without a correspondent practice. If we consider the design and end of this ordinance, we cannot but see that such persons cut themselves off from all right to it. Is it fit that a drunkard, a swearer, or any profane sinner should commemorate the death of the holy Jesus, while he has no love to him, but is determined to go on in sin? Should they wear the badge of Christ's disciples, whose lives proclaim them his enemies? Should they affix their seals to the covenant of grace, who have never consented to it, but are grossly violating it by their practice? Should they hold communion with Christ and his people, who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Hear the apostle upon this head: *Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils*, 1 Cor. x. 21. the thing is absurd and impracticable. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.* 2 Cor. vi. 14—17. As to public offences, the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the ministers of Christ: *Them that sin*, that is, that sin publicly, rebuke *before all, that others also may fear.* 1 Tim. v. 20. To the same purpose he speaks to Titus; *a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject*, Tit. iii. 10, or cast out of the church. This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in principle, but it may undoubtedly be applied to vicious practices; for, as Archbishop Tillotson justly observes, 'The worst of heresies is a bad life.' As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, till they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprised of it; and if he pay no regard to that authority, he is to be excluded from the

society. This is according to Christ's express direction, in Matt. xviii. 15, &c. *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen-man and a publican.* There is nothing more plain in scripture, than that scandalous members should be cast out of the church; and an excessive indulgence is most severely censured. St. Paul orders Timothy to *turn away from such as have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.* 2 Tim iii. 5. He lays the weight of his apostolic authority upon the christian church in this case. *We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.* 2 Thess. iii. 6. The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are severely threatened by Christ himself, for tolerating the corrupt sect of the Nicolaitans, and the followers of Balaam's and Jezebel's profane and loose practices, and not casting them out of their communion. Rev. ii. 14, &c. And the church of Ephesus is commended for her strict discipline, and *that she could not bear them that were evil, and had tried pretended apostles*, discovered and rejected them as impostors. But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies, for abundant evidence of the necessity of this holy discipline. Here St. Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan. He urges this wholesome severity, as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance, and especially to keep their church pure. *Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?* And just so the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole society. It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline, that the primitive church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathens and idolaters. And it is the want of this that has so scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess. Let not us imitate them, but pity and pray for them, lest we be-

come a mere mass of corruption, like them. The apostle forbids not only all religious communion, but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more shy of them than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. *I wrote to you*, says he, *not to keep company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world*: that is, 'I do not mean that you should break off all intercourse with the fornicators of this world, who are professedly of the world, and make no pretensions to christianity; or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then ye must needs go out of the world:' all places are so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them without leaving human society altogether. *But now I have written unto you*, says he, *not to keep company, if any one that is called a brother*, a christian brother by profession, here lies the emphasis, *if any one that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard or an extortioner, not to keep company with such an one, no not to eat.* 1 Cor v. ver. 10. 11. Cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with such a one: do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper.

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority to the faithful exercise of discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of mankind, yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make a compliment of the ordinances of Christ, it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable and absurd thing for persons by their offences to constrain the officers of the church to animadvert upon them, and then to take it ill that they faithfully do their duty. All that is required of them is a profession of deep repentance for their misconduct and a promise of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do to repair the injury they have done to religion, to satisfy the society to which they belong, and restore themselves into the charity of their brethren, whose hearts are so grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform, but go on in their wicked courses? Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the christian church, and therefore should not claim them. It is in vain here to object, 'That none can forgive sins but God, and therefore they will not confess them to man.' For, as I told you,

every member of the christian church ought to give his fellow-members some evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their charity. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as profess his repentance? It is only God that can pardon the sin, as it is done against him: but the church is also offended, and every society as well as the particular person who is offended, has a right to demand satisfaction. Hence we are commanded to *confess our faults to one another*, James v. 16. and that is a proud, impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among christians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this small satisfaction. The incestuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholesome severities used with him. And upon this, the apostle, in his second epistle, advises them to *forgive him*, (which implies, that in some sense the offence was against the church; and, in that sense, that they had power to forgive him) *that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, lest he should be swallowed up with over-much sorrow.* 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. And shall we be more obstinate than an incestuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this subject naturally came in my way, and as it is necessary for us as church-members to have right ideas of gospel-discipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will so remember it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter.

I now proceed to what is more practical.

Let me as an herald of Jesus Christ proclaim to you the business of the next Lord's day. We are going to commemorate the most important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accomplished about seventeen hundred years ago, but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy consequences to the remotest periods of eternity, I mean the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for us. And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Saviour? Where the happy persons that believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your precious Redeemer; come, refresh your souls once more with the sweet remembrance of his love. O! shall his dear name be forgot among us? What! forgotten, after all he has done, after all he has suffered for us? Can you bear the thought? We are go-

ing to profess openly before a scoffing world, that we are the servants and disciples of a crucified Christ ; we are going to put on the badges of his servants, and wear his livery ; to enlist as volunteers under his banner, and swear allegiance and fidelity to him. And where are those that are willing to join with us ? *Who is upon the Lord's side ? Who ?* Come ye that will have Christ for your Master, come enter your names in his list : be fixed and determined for him. *How long will ye halt between two opinions ?* It is a plain case and requires no long time to deliberate. Come ye that would stand among his people at his right hand at last, come now with prepared hearts, and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlasting covenant with our God, and to set our solemn seal to the contract. And who among you gives his consent ? Who is willing to take the Lord Jesus for his only Saviour and Lord, and to give himself up to him entirely and forever ? Who will avouch the Lord to be his God, that He may avouch him to be one of his people ? How are your hearts, my brethren, disposed in this respect ? Do they give a full consent ? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your lusts and sinful pleasu res ? In short, do you consent to the covenant of grace ? If so, come and confirm it with that solemn oath and seal. God and Christ are agreed to the proposal ; and if you agree, the happy contract is made : it is established firmer than the pillars of heaven ; and if you had them, you might venture ten thousand souls upon it. We are going to maintain communion with the saints, and sit down with them at the same table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourselves with that little flock, that despised but happy few ? If you would mingle with them in heaven, separate from the wicked world, and join them now ; and as a token of it eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with them. But we are going to maintain communion of a still more exalted kind : communion with the Father of our spirits, with the Son of his love, and with the Holy Ghost. And where are they that pant and languish for this sacred and divine fellowship ? Come to the table of the Lord, the place of interview, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldness, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My brethren, if, upon careful self-examination, you find reason to hope you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants,

which I have described, I require you, in the name of that Jesus who expired upon the cross for you, a name which one would think should have some weight with you; in his endearing, irresistible name, I require you to come to his table. This is not only your privilege, but your duty; and you cannot neglect it, without the basest ingratitude and wickedness. Shall Jesus, when he views the guests around his table, find your seat empty? Alas! shall he have reason to say, 'What! has such a one turned his back upon me? I bought him with my blood, and have I deserved to be thus treated by him?' O! my brethren, is it come to that pass with you that you stand in need of persuasions to commemorate that Saviour who laid down his life for you? Had he been as shy of a cross as you are of his table, as backward to die as you are to commemorate his death, alas! what would have become of you?

What are the obstructions and discouragements that lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the case is so plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared? But have you examined yourselves impartially by what I have said? Are you sure you have the qualifications mentioned? If so, your way is very clear. Or if you are not sure, does it appear probable to you? If so, you may humbly venture. Or if you cannot go so far as a probability, have you some trembling hopes? hopes which, though they often waver, yet you cannot entirely cast away, though you admit all the evidence you can get, and are desirous to know the very worst of yourselves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would advise you to come, though with trembling. If you are impartial in self-examination, and yet cannot after all discover that you are destitute of those qualifications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived: persons are never deceived in this case but by their own carelessness and partiality; therefore take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your splitting on this rock.

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your sacramental vows, but may apostatise from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God: and I appeal to yourselves, whether it be most likely you will obtain strength from him in the way of duty, or in the neglect of it?

My brethren, do you do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those that, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it; but you *shall be kept by his power through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet. i. 5, and *he will never leave you nor forsake you*, Heb. xiii. 5, therefore in his strength, humbly make the adventure.

As for such of you as have not the qualifications described, and yet are communicants at the Lord's table, I have a few serious considerations to offer to you.

1. Did you never observe that solemn warning of St. Paul, which, like a flaming sword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? *Whosoever shall eat of this bread, and drink of this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and eateth and drinketh damnation, or judgment, to himself.* 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. Keep off, therefore, ye unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse fall upon you and crush you to ruin.

2. To what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted can do this, without an interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and life. And will you incur such dreadful guilt, without answering any valuable end by it?

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to Christ in this ordinance, when your hearts are not well affected towards him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal; but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the saints, when you are none of them? Or with God, when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants, when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people, when you belong to the camp of the gloomy god of this world? Will you act the part of Judas over again, and compliment Christ with a traiterous kiss? What absurdity, what gross hypocrisy, what a daring insult is this? Can Omniscience be imposed upon by such pretensions? Or will a jealous God let them escape unpunished? Do but read a part of the fiftieth

Psalm : you will see your doom, ver. 16—22. *Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee ?—These things hast thou done, and I kept silence : thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* O, Sirs, consider, it will be a poor plea at last to have it to say, *Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence ? and thou hast taught in our streets.* The supreme Judge will, notwithstanding, pronounce the dreadful sentence upon you, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Luke xiii. 26, 27.

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance ; and in the use of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications ? His word, prayer, meditation, and such means, are for the common use of saints and sinners, and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord's supper is the peculiar privilege of such as are true christians already ; and is intended only to cherish and improve true religion where it is begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative, is preposterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment. Sinners, go first upon your bended knees before God ; cry to him with all the earnestness of perishing creatures, for converting grace. Think upon your miserable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation, till your hearts are deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his word, till you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded, come to this ordinance, and God, angels and men, will bid you welcome.

5. Consider how aggravated your punishment will be, if you continue in your present condition. To sink into hell from the table of the Lord ! O ! what a terrible fall ! They that perished from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison of you. A lost communicant !—One that went to hell with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Saviour, as it were, in his mouth ! O ! methinks such a one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions. How will lost angels, and lost heathens, wonder and stare at you as an horrible phenomenon, a dreadful curiosity ! How will they upbraid you, " How art thou fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer, son of the morning! art thou also become as one of us?" To tell the truth without reserve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of seeing such of you on the left hand of the Judge. O! what a shocking figure will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Christ the whole of your religion, but begin where you should, in earnest endeavours after a new heart and life, in the use of the means appointed for that end.

But there are some of you, perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are safe, because you have not been guilty of profaning this solemn institution. You are conscious you are not prepared, and therefore most contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, sundry of you who have lived in this neglect all your lives. I have a few things to say to you, and I pray you to apply them to yourselves.

1. Consider what it is you say, when you declare you are unfit for this ordinance. There are some that seem to make a merit of it, that they stay away from a sense of their want of preparation. But what is this want? It is the want of all love to God, of faith in Christ, of repentance for sin; it is the want of holiness of heart and life, and every good thing; it is to be without pardon, without a title to heaven, without any interest in the righteousness of Christ; it is to be a slave to sin and Satan, an heir of hell, a poor perishing creature, liable every moment to be cut off, and sink under the weight of divine vengeance: this is your case if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but such things as I have mentioned can render you unfit. And is this a safe case? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! is there so much merit in neglecting to remember Christ in this institution, as will render your case safe, and indemnify you? Must you not be shocked at the thought?

2. Are you using all proper means to obtain preparation, with the utmost diligence and earnestness? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If so, it is plain you love to be unprepared: you take pleasure in being disqualified to remember the Lord Jesus. And while you are careless about this, you are virtually careless what will become of you, careless whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlasting residence: and O! what will be the end of such a course! and how terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you that you have lived so many years in the world, without affectionately commemorating that Saviour who died for you, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in suffering so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by neglected? what can be a more aggravated wickedness?

4. This neglect clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* Now this brings the matter to a short issue. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the wilful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus. With what face then can you pretend that you love him? Your love is reprobated, and will not stand the test.

5. Let me remind you of what I observed before, that, by the neglect of this ordinance, you practically renounce your baptism. You are now of age to act for yourselves, and you have not approved of the act of your parents, by ratifying it in your own person, therefore you abjure it; you renounce the blessed Trinity, in whose name you were baptised, and to whom you were devoted; and you give yourselves back to an horrible trinity of another kind, to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God that made you, and with Jesus of Nazareth? Pause and think before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation. But, alas! you have agreed to it already, by refusing to renew your early dedication in your own persons. Therefore the best you can now do is to recall your renunciation and immediately acknowledge the act of your parents as your own.

I would inculcate this particularly on young people. You that are eight or ten years old, or more, you have sense enough to act for yourselves in so plain a case. And what are you resolved upon? Will you be Christ's or Satan's? You cannot avoid choosing one or the other for your master; for not positively choosing Christ, is virtually choosing the devil for your Lord, and hell for your home. If you stand to the act of your parents in dedicating you to God, come make it your own at his table. Such

young guests would be an ornament to it: and O! that we may early see you there properly prepared?

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you list. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born the servants of God, and you will continue under obligations to be such in spite of you. Is he not the most excellent of Beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preserver, your Redeemer? And do these things infer no obligation upon you? Have you not also, in sickness, or under horror of conscience, made vows and resolutions in your own persons? And are you free to sin still? The truth of the case is, do what you will, you are under the strongest obligations to God, and you cannot shake them off; and if you will not observe these obligations to duty, you must submit forever to your indispensable obligation to punishment. And he will make you know that he has a right to punish you, if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What avails it that you can avoid the Lord's table, when you cannot possibly shun death, or avoid his tribunal? Here try all your art, and you will find it in vain. And if you are not prepared for this ordinance of worship in the church on earth, much less are you prepared for those more exalted forms of worship in the church in heaven! What then will become of you?

In short, it is a national sin in our country, that the table of the Lord is contemptible; that men who call themselves christians live in the wilful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion, to be a memorial of himself. Alas! the very memory of Christ is almost lost among us. *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Jer. v. 9.

Perhaps some of you will say, "You shut us up in a strange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared, we sin; and if we stay away, we sin; and what then shall we do?" My brethren, I thus shut you up, on purpose that you may see what a wretched case you are in, and that there is no safety for you while you continue in it. You are shut up under a necessity of sinning, and the best choice in such a condition can be only the lesser evil; though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come

or stay away, you grievously sin: it is all sin, peril, ruin, and misery all throughs: you should neither come unprepared, nor stay away unprepared; that is, you should not be unprepared at all. Your want of preparation is in itself a complication of wickedness; and whatever you do in that state, you are neither safe nor in the way of duty: it is altogether a state of sin and danger. The only way of safety and duty is to seek for preparation immediately, and with the utmost earnestness, and then to come to the Lord's supper. And O! let me set all this congregation upon this work before we part to day, and make it the business of this week. You have spent many a week about things of less importance, and will you refuse one to this great work? Now set about it; now begin to look into the state of your neglected souls; now recollect your sins; look in upon your depraved hearts; look back upon a miserable mis-spent life; look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal just before you; look to Jesus in the agonies of crucifixion on Mount Calvary; and O! look up to God in earnest prayer for his mercy. Let these things follow you home to your houses; let them dwell upon your hearts night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away; for O! they will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at last, if you now turn them off. O! that God may prepare a people for himself in this poor place! O! that he would visit this barren spot with the showers of divine grace! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich entertainment before us! AMEN.

SERMON 33.

THE NATURE AND BLESSEDNESS OF SONSHIP WITH GOD.

1 JOHN III. 1, 2.—*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

THOUGH the schemes of divine Providence run on with the most consummate harmony, and will at last terminate in the wisest ends, yet, to the undiscerning eyes of mortals, confusion

reigns through this world, and nothing appears, in this infant state of things, in that light in which eternity, the state of maturity, will represent every thing. This remark is particularly exemplified in the dispensations of grace towards the heirs of heaven. Though they are not in such unmingled darkness, even in this region of ignorance and uncertainty, as to have no evidences at all of their being the objects of divine love, and regenerated by the holy Spirit, but may, in some shining moments at least, conclude that they are even now the sons of God, yet they can form no adequate ideas of the immensity of that love which has adopted them as the Sons of God, and made them heirs of heaven, who were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. There are indeed such rays of this love, that, like a flash of lightning, break through the cloud that surrounds them, as cast them into a pleasing consternation, and make them stand and pause in delightful astonishment. In a kind of transport of ignorant admiration, they are often exclaiming, *What manner of love is this !* how great, how vast, how immense, how unaccountable, how incomprehensible, that love which has given us, us rebellious sinners and heirs of ruin, the title of the sons of God, and the many privileges of such relation ! Behold what sort of unheard of, unparalleled love is this ! behold it with intense observation and grateful wonder.

Ye trifling sons of men, abstract your thoughts from the toys of earth, and here fix your attention ; here look and gaze, till you are so transported with the survey of this love, as to be engaged to the most vigorous endeavours to be partakers of it. Our brethren in grace, that share in the same privilege, do you especially pause, behold, and wonder. Let all your admiring powers exert themselves to the utmost in the contemplation of that love which has bestowed upon you so gracious, so honourable a distinction as that of sons of the King of heaven. And ye blessed inhabitants of heaven, who know the import of this glorious title, and the riches of the inheritance reserved for us ; ye angels that are happy in your Maker's goodness, but have not been distinguished with redeeming grace, look down from your celestial thrones, look down to this contemptible earth, and view the greatest exploit of divine infinite love ; for surely no atchievement of Almighty grace among your various orders through the vast of heaven, can equal this, that we rebellious worms should be called the sons of God, the highest title in

which you can glory. Behold, and wonder, and adore with us, and supply our defects of praise. You see farther into the secrets of this mystery of love than we in our present state, who can only pause in silent admiration, or vent our blind conjectures upon it. *What manner of love is this!* therefore give all your contemplative powers a loose upon a theme you can so deeply penetrate.

Farther, As the sons of God in their present state cannot comprehend that love which has conferred this title upon them, so they know not fully the glorious import of the title: they only know in general, that when their Father appears they *shall be like him*, but they do not exactly and fully know what that likeness is: it doth not yet appear, even to themselves, what they shall be. Their liveliest imagination can form no adequate ideas what glorious creatures they will ere long be: they are utter strangers to their future selves. They know themselves only at present in their infancy; but when these little children of God, these babes in grace, arrive at their adult age, and grow up to the fulness of the stature of Christ, they will be prodigies to themselves, and mysteries which they cannot now conceive. In this world we are accustomed to little and obscure things, and our thoughts are like their objects; we see nothing sufficiently glorious to suggest to us any proper images of the glory of the sons of God, when they come to maturity, and enter upon the inheritance to which they are born. The splendour of the meridian sun, the grandeur of kings, and the parade of nobles, are but obscure shadows of the glory and magnificence of the meanest pious beggar, of the poorest Lazarus that ever languished upon earth, and is now arrived at heaven. The difference is greater than that between Job upon the dunghill, lying in ashes, and covered with ulcers, and Solomon in all his glory. However, amidst all our ignorance, we may rest confident in this, that if we are now the children of God, we shall be conformed to him when he appears to us in all his glory on the other side of death, and especially when he appears in the clouds in all the majesty of the universal judge, when every eye shall see him: and though we should know no more than this in general, we may rest implicitly satisfied that we shall be inconceivably glorious and happy, since the perfection of our nature consists in conformity to God. We may be sure that that state which the apostle here,

by unerring inspiration, calls a likeness to God, the standard of all excellency, must be as perfect as our nature can bear. The apostle having said, that *when he shall appear, we shall be like him*, subjoins, *for we shall see him as he is.* This vision of the blessed God in his unveiled glory may be here mentioned, either as the evidence, or as the cause of our likeness to God when he shall appear. Considering it as an evidence, the meaning is, 'It is evident that we shall be in some measure like to God when he appears, otherwise we could not bear the full vision of his glories! we could not see him and live.' It is also evident the apostle here speaks of the vision of God as an happiness, and the blessed privilege of his sons. Now to see God could afford no pleasure to such as are not like to him: they would be shocked and confounded at the sight, and shrink from it, and by how much the clearer the vision, by so much the more they would hate him, because by so much the more they would discover his contrariety to them. Therefore it is a sufficient evidence of our likeness to God, that we can bear the vision of his naked perfections with pleasure, for none that are unlike to him can bear it. Considering the passage in the other view, which probably was what the apostle intended, as the cause of likeness to him, it means, that the full and direct views of him will be transformative and efficacious to change the beholders into his likeness. As the light shining upon glass renders it transparent, or as the sun diffuses its lustre into a diamond, and gives it an intrinsic radiency, so the discoveries of the divine perfections will impress their image upon the minds they illuminate. Their views will not be superficial and speculative, nor attract an idle gaze, but they shall be vital, efficacious and impressive; and no wonder if such views, which we now know so little of, should produce a perfection we can now so little conceive.

If the sons of God are such strangers to the riches of their present title, and the dignity and glory of their future selves, no wonder a blind world should not know them. If it does not yet appear to themselves what they shall be, much less does it appear to others, who are strangers to their heavenly Father, who know not his lineaments, and therefore cannot discern his children by their resemblance to him. This the apostle may intimate when he says, *It doth not appear* (that is, it doth not appear to others) *what we shall be;* and we are led to this sense by the former verse, *therefore the world,* the general run of mankind, who are

strangers to God, *know us not* ; that is, do not distinguish, love, and honour us, who are the children of God, *because they know him not.* As they are ignorant of our Father, and disregard him, so they accordingly treat us. They look upon us with contempt, and are wholly ignorant of our heavenly extraction and dignity, and thus it will be till we shine in all the glory of the children of so illustrious a king, and possess the inheritance of the saints in light : then, to their confusion, they shall discern the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Mal. iii. *ult.*— I shall,

I. Show you what is the import of the glorious title, the sons of God.

II. Mention some instances of the present ignorance of the sons of God, with regard to their future state. And,

III. Show in what respects they are mistaken and unknown to the world.

I. I shall show what is the import of this glorious title, the sons of God.

It is evident that the title is used here, not in so general a sense as elsewhere, where it signifies no more than the creatures of God, Luke iii. *ult.* (Acts xvii. 28, 29,) for here it is mentioned as the peculiar privilege of true christians, in which the world in general does not partake. In the sense of the text, it implies that believers are born again of God ; that they are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children ; and that they are the heirs of heaven.

1. To be the sons of God, implies that they are regenerated, or born of him.

He is a son who is begotten and born ; and therefore to be a child of God, supposes that we are begotten by him. This seems to be the peculiar foundation of that sonship the apostle here has immediately in view ; for it is the thought of being born of God, mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, that seems to introduce the text, and wraps him away, in the fourth verse of this chapter, into that transported exclamation, *Behold ! what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God !*

This new birth you have often heard me describe, as a thorough universal change of a corrupt rebellious sinner into an affectionate, penitent, obedient servant of God. His views of things, and dispositions towards them, are happily altered, which produce a correspondent change in his practice. But I cannot enlarge without excluding the other subjects of my discourse.

I pray God you would seriously consider the importance of this spiritual birth, and not vainly deem yourselves the sons of God while you are strangers to it: you may as well become the sons of men without being generated by human parents, as the sons of God without being regenerated by supernatural grace; for the scripture has repeatedly declared the absolute necessity of it in various terms. All that become the children of God are born of him, and *not of blood*, or by natural generation, nor *of the will of the flesh*, or by any natural propensions of theirs, nor *of the will of man*, or by the best endeavours of others with them. John i. 12, 13. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* begets them again 1 Peter i. 3, and creates them anew, Ephes. ii. 10, so that *old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new* 2 Cor. v. 17. And Christ himself, who best knows the terms of admission into heaven, has assured us with a *verily, verily, that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3, 5. And this is the declaration of infallible inspiration, that *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision*; that is, a conformity to the externals of the Jewish or Christian religion is of no avail to salvation, *but the new creature.* Gal. vi. 15.

2. They that are the sons of God are admitted to enjoy the privileges of children; and this is implied in their title.

God here treats us with his usual condescension in expressing divine things in the humble language of mortals, by metaphors borrowed from affairs amongst men, that are familiar to us. Therefore form an idea of the usual privileges which a child enjoys from a gracious and powerful father, and leave proper room for the infinitely superior perfections of our heavenly Father to those of the most excellent human parents, and you may from the analogy know something of the peculiar privileges of the children of God. A son, you know, has liberty of access to his father, however great; he obtains his requests; he has the guardianship and compassion of his father; and is seasonably corrected by him for his good. And thus our heavenly Father deals with the children of his grace.

He gives them liberty of access to him in prayer and the institutions of the gospel. He not only allows them to attend upon his ordinances, which many do that continue strangers to him, but at times he enlarges their hearts, so that they find themselves near him; they are admitted into his presence-chamber in free audience with him, and pour out all their hearts before him, vent

their complaints, beg a supply of their wants, and render their grateful acknowledgments for his mercies. This temper of mind is so suitable to their relation as the sons of God, that the holy Spirit, as the author of it, is called the Spirit of Adoption; and the children of God are not capable of exercising this filial freedom at pleasure, but just as he enables them to *draw near with humble boldness to the throne of grace*. Rom. viii. 14, 15, 26, 27. Heb. x. 22. and 2 Cor. iii 17. And the holy Spirit, as a Spirit of liberty and adoption, is a privilege entailed upon the sons of God, and which they at times enjoy. Gal. iv. 5. 6.

Again, As the children of God have liberty to address their father, so they have the privilege of having their petitions graciously heard and answered. An human parent is ready to give good gifts to his children, and much more is our heavenly Father. Thus Christ reasons in the most familiar and moving manner, in Matt. vii. 7—11. and Luke xi. 11—13. and he seems to intimate that this privilege is implied in the relation, by repeating the endearing term Father, in Matt. vi. 6. 8. 9. *Pray to thy Father—and thy Father shall reward thee—Your Father knoweth what things you have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father, &c.*

Again, the children of God are entitled to his protection and compassion. His guardian care is celebrated in Psalm xci. and Psalm cxxi. and his tender compassion in Psalm ciii. 13. Isa. lxiii. 9. and in numberless passages that speak of *his bowels of mercy, his compassions, &c.*

Another privilege of the children of God is, that they are seasonably corrected by his fatherly displeasure. This indeed they are too apt to count a calamity rather than a privilege; but since his correction is necessary for their reformation, since it proceeds from the benevolence of a Father, and not from the vengeance of an incensed Judge, since it is intended for their benefit and not for their destruction, since they are supported under it, and it has a proper measure and seasonable end, and since it will be more than compensated with future rewards, it follows, that their chastisement is one of their blessings, and as such it seems promised rather than threatened, and mentioned as a badge of the sons of God, Ps. lxxxix. 30—34. Heb. xii. 5—11. and many of the children of God have found reason to praise him for this wholesome severity. Ps. cxix. 67, 68, 71. Upon this principle St. James exhorts them to *rejoice when they enter into divers tempta-*

tions, James i. 2, and St. Peter tells them that they will befal them only *if need be.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

3. The children of God are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, and their relation implies a title to it.

They are born to a crown, begotten to *an inheritance incorruptible and that fadeth not away, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 3. 4. *If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii, 16, 17. Gal. iv. 7. And how vast their inheritance is, you may learn from Rev. xxi. 7. and 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22

What advancement is this to mean, sinful, miserable creatures! Out of prison they come to reign. They are raised from the dunghill, and set among the princes of heaven. No wonder the apostle should exclaim, *Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*

Thus I have briefly shewn you the glorious import of your relation, the sons of God; and you see it should be the greatest concern of each of you to inquire whether you bear it. To determine this point, I need only tell you, that if you are the children of God, you have been supernaturally begotten by him, as I observed before, (James i. 18) and you have the temper of dutiful children towards him, particularly you reverence and honour him; (Mal. i. 6.) you love and fear to offend him, and cheerfully do his will, and mourn over your undutifulness; you are partakers of his divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4, and bear the lineaments of his holiness. But if it be otherwise with you, as I fear it is with many, if you be not conformed to the moral perfections of God and bear his image, if you have not the dispositions of dutiful children towards him, but the temper of the devil, and do his works, then *you are of your father the devil.* And though you may resent this, as the Jews did, the charge is fixed upon you. Therefore awaken all the importunity of your souls, and cry to him for regenerating grace, that you also may become the sons and daughters of the living God. But if you find these characters of the children of God which I just now mentioned, then *rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice:* you are happier than princes, more great and honourable than the sons of earthly kings. You cannot now form any ideas what miracles of glory and blessedness your Father will make of such mean, guilty, and wretched things as yourselves. Which introduces what I next proposed.

II. To mention some instances of the ignorance of the sons of God with regard to their future state.

It is true indeed, and some of you, I doubt not, know it by experience, that the children of God in some shining moments enjoy prelibations of heaven, and even now *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Peter i. 8.* just as a child in infancy stumbles upon a manly thought: and as the first dawnings of reason may give a child some obscure hint of the masterly reasonings of a mature genius; so from these foretastes of heaven, the sons of God may form some faint ideas of the perfection of its happiness in full enjoyment. They find these dispositions feebly working in them now, which, when brought to perfection, will constitute their blessedness; and they now find so much real happiness in the exercise of such dispositions, though in an imperfect degree, as fully convinces them that nothing is necessary to make them completely happy but the perfection of such exercises, and an entire freedom from contrary principles. But what this perfection is they have not yet experienced; their highest thoughts fall short of it; and *it doth not yet appear to them what they shall be* in the following particulars.

1. It doth not yet appear what they shall be with respect to the enlargement of the faculties of their souls.

That the human soul is capable of vast enlargements, that its faculties may expand to great dimensions, is evident; and we find by experience its improvements from childhood to youth, and thence to the close of life, especially in men of a studious turn. And we may be sure that, when like a bird out of a cage, it gets loose among its kindred spirits, and flies at large in its proper element, its faculties will be vastly improved: otherwise it would be overborne and crushed with the weight of glory; it would be dazzled with the intolerable blaze of heavenly brightness, like a mole that has wrought itself into day-light. As a child is utterly incapable of manly exercises, so, without a proportionable enlargement of its powers, the soul would be incapable of exercising them about the infinite objects then before it, and of joining in the exalted services of that mature world. You may therefore rest confident in this, ye sons of God, that your little souls will then be vastly improved. But as the infant cannot know beforehand the improvement of riper years, so it is with you. Compare

* Χαρᾷ—δεδοξασμενῃ, a glorified joy.

your present selves with your infant-selves, and you will see a vast difference even in the present state ; and how vast the difference between what you now are and what you will be, when you enter into a world entirely new, the proper region, the natural elements of spirits ! Beloved, you are now the sons of God ; and he will make you such beings as becomes so near a relation to such a Father ; and what prodigies can he make of you ! He that could make you what you are out of nothing, in the course of a few years, what can he make you out of what you now are, through the series of everlasting ages ! How can he mature and enlarge your souls from one degree of perfection to another ! so that, in some future period, you will no more resemble what you are now, than you now resemble what you were in the womb, or upon the breast. Your understandings, through an endless duration, may be still brightening, without ever coming to their meridian ; and your views be still enlarging, though still infinitely beneath the object of your contemplation. It is fit that souls so improved should be united to bodies suited to them. Which leads me to observe,

2. It does not yet appear to you what kind of glorious bodies you will have after the resurrection.

We are sure they will still be material bodies, otherwise they would not be bodies at all. But matter we know is capable of prodigious refinements. Yonder globe of light, the sun, is of the same original matter with a clod of earth, and differs only in modifications. How vast the difference between this animal flesh on our bodies, and earth and water ! and yet they are originally the same. Earth and water are the materials of which grain and other vegetables, that animals feed upon, are formed ; and our bodies consist of grain formed into bread, and of the flesh of beasts : so true is it, not only with respect to Adam, but all his posterity, that they are but dust. In short, there is a transmutation of matter into a surprising variety of forms, wherever we cast our eyes : the linen we wear was once earth, that was first refined into flax, then formed into thread, then woven into what we now see it. Thus our bodies may be changed in a most amazing manner, and yet continue substantially the same. St. Paul tells us, that they will be spiritual bodies, 1 Cor. xv. 44, that is, so exquisitely refined, that they will resemble proper spirits, as near as it is possible, while they retain their materiality ; and elsewhere he says, that *the Lord Jesus will change our vile body,*

that it may be formed like unto his glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. Such is the glory of Christ's body in its now exalted state, that the splendours breaking from it struck Paul and his fellow-travellers to the ground, and deprived him of sight for three days; how illustrious then must those bodies be that resemble his, though we allow his a suitable superiority! This the apostle intimates by representing the change of the bodies of saints at the resurrection as a mighty exploit of God's all-subduing power. Phil. iii. 21. We are sure the body will not then be a clog to the active spirit, but a proper instrument for the employments of heaven. It may be free from the law of gravitation, and capable of moving every way with equal speed; it may be nimble and quick as a glance of lightning; it may be adorned with a visible glory more bright than the sun in its meridian lustre, like the body of Christ on the mount of transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 2. Dan. xii. 3. and Matt. xiii. 43 It will then be incapable of pain, sickness and death, Isa. xxxiii. 24 1 Cor. xv. 33, and will no more feel hunger and thirst, nor any of the appetites of animal nature; Rev. vii. 16. it will be capable of the most excellent sensations of pleasure through every organ; and a suitable companion to an improved and glorified soul. Such bodies will the saints have: but what it is to have such bodies, we have now no experience; and shall never know till the glorious morning of the resurrection.

3. It doth not yet appear to us what it is to be perfect in holiness.

However enlarged and glorious our souls and bodies should become, we should be still miserable without a proportionable perfection in holiness. Now this, alas! we do not as yet know. We humbly hope some of us know what it is to feel the spark of divine love in our breasts. We hope we have tasted some small drops of bliss, though intermingled with gall and wormwood. We know what it is to exert our feeble powers in the service of the blessed God, and in contemplating and admiring his excellencies; but, alas! sin still cleaves to us, and deadens our powers; numberless imperfections attend our best moments. But Oh! to have all the powers of soul and body enlarged; to exert them to the full stretch in the exercises of heaven; to find them animated and directed by the most consummate holiness, and free from every the least taint of sin, what an inconceivable state

is this! O how unlike the present! Sure in such a state we should hardly know ourselves: it would astonish us to find that we, who had been so long accustomed to be assaulted and perplexed with some guilty thought or sinful inclination, should at once commence perfectly free from it; that we, who have so long made such languid essays, should find all our powers full of unwearied immortal vigour! what an happy surprise will this be!

4. It does not yet appear what will be the employments and services of the heavenly world.

We know, from the plain declarations of sacred writ, that the contemplation of the divine perfections, and their displays in the works of nature and grace, celebrating the praises of God, and prostrate adorations before him, will be no small part of the happiness of a future state. But we have no reason to suppose that it will consist entirely in contemplation and adoration. A state of activity will be a proper heaven for vigorous immortals. Will separate spirits be employed with their fellow-angels as guardians to their brethren while in these mortal regions? A very pleasant employ to generous and benevolent minds! Will they be ambassadors of their Sovereign to the most remote parts of his empire, to bear his messages, and discharge his orders? Will they be engaged in important services to the present and future creations, and the instruments of divine beneficence to worlds now unknown? A philosophic curiosity would pry into these things, and even a pious thirst for knowledge would be satisfied: but, alas! we know not what answer to give to these inquiries, till the light of eternity shall break on us. But,

5. The sons of God, in consequence of their improvements, natural and moral, and of their exalted services and employments, will be made so exquisitely happy, as they can have now no ideas of the felicity.

We know not what it is, in the present state, to have every want supplied, every desire satisfied, and all our vast capacity of happiness filled to the utmost; and therefore we can form no just conceptions of our future selves, when we shall be thus perfectly happy.

Behold, ye sons of God; behold the wonders that open before you! see to what vast things you are born! Can you survey this mystery, and not be lost in pleasing wonder, and cry out, *Behold! what manner of love is bestowed upon us!*

Alas ! can you forget your own happiness ; and let your thoughts and affections run out upon the things of this world, as if they were your portion ? Shall the King's sons thus degrade their dignity, and depreciate their inheritance ?

And you, unhappy sinners ; ye who are not the sons of God by regeneration, what do you think of your case, when it is the very reverse of all this ? Your souls, indeed, will be enlarged, but enlarged only that they may be more capacious vessels for torment : and your bodies shall be made strong and immortal ; but it will be to bear strong, immortal misery. Instead of becoming perfect in holiness, you will arrive to an horrid perfection in sin. As all sin will be rooted out from the hearts of the children of God, so all the virtuous and amiable qualities you might retain in this world, will fall from you : and as the children of God will be transformed into pure unmingled holiness, you will degenerate into pure unmingled wickedness, and consequently you must be as miserable as they will be happy ; and all your enlarged capacities will be as full of torment as theirs of bliss. I may therefore adapt the text to you, sinners : now you are the children of the devil ; *but it doth not appear what you shall be* ; you know not what prodigies of vengeance, what miracles of misery you shall be made ; therefore awake from your carelessness and neglect, and seek earnestly to become the children of God.

III. And lastly, I proceed to shew in what respects the sons of God are unknown to the world, and mistaken by them.

The irreligious world may see a considerable difference between those that are, in the judgment of charity, the children of God, and others ; but this they rather look upon as an odious singularity, than as a peculiar glory and excellency. They may see their life is not according to the course of this world ; and, if they were witnesses to their secret devotions, or could penetrate their hearts, they would see a vastly greater difference ; but by how much the greater difference, by so much the more they hate them. And though they still profess a mighty veneration for religion, yet, wherever it appears, they hate, oppose, and asperse it ; not indeed under that honourable name, but under some odious character that will cloke their wickedness, and the more effectually expose it. They love religion, they say, and God forbid they should speak a word against it ; but they hate hypocrisy, preciseness, &c. and wherever a person appears remarkably religious, they will be sure to brand him

with some of their odious names. Thus living christianity, and its professors, have always met with more contempt and hatred in the world, than easy and pliable, or even the most profligate and abandoned sinners.

Now this is owing to the ignorance of the world as to what the sons of God shall ere long be. They do not look upon them as such favourites of Heaven ; otherwise they would not dare to despise them at such a rate. The sons of God are princes in disguise ; and therefore they are not known by a blind world, who, as they are ignorant of their Father, cannot discern his features in them.

O, sinners ! could you but see in all his future glory, the meanest saint whom you now contemn and ridicule, how would it astonish you ! it would tempt you rather to the extreme of adoration than contempt ; how willingly would you change conditions with him !

Well, stay a little, and there will be a full *manifestation of the sons of God.* Romans viii. 19. You will then see those whom you now account stupid mopish creatures, that have no taste for the pleasures of life, shining more glorious than the sun ; happy as their natures can admit, and, in their humble sphere, resembling God himself.

It is, however, all things considered, an instance of divine wisdom, that *it does not yet appear* to themselves or to others what the sons of God shall be. Such a manifestation would quite stun and confound the world, and strike it into a torpid consternation. It would render the children of God utterly impatient of the present life and its enjoyments, and even of the low devotion of the church on earth ; it would put an end to the necessary activity about temporal concerns, break off the designs of providence, and quite alter the form of administration in this world. Therefore the manifestation is wisely put off to the most proper season.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

First. What a state of darkness and imperfection is this ! We slipped into being we know not how, and remember nothing of our own formation : and we shall be, ere long, we know not what. Alas ! how short are our views ! all before us is impenetrable darkness, and we can see but a very little way behind us. What small cause then have the wisest of us to be elated with our own knowledge ! In comparison of angelic beings, and even

of our future selves, we see no more than the mole grovelling in the earth, compared with the keen-eyed aerial eagle mounting aloft.

Secondly, But what surprising discoveries of things will flash upon us when we enter the other world! O! my brethren, when we ascend the heavenly mount, and take large surveys all around of the immensity of the works of God, when the unveiled perfections of the Deity suddenly shine upon our eyes in all their naked glory, upon our waking from the sleep of death, how shall we be lost in wonders! What scenes of contemplation will then open upon our gazing minds! How shall we be astonished at ourselves, and ready to vent our surprise in some such strains as these! 'Is this I, who so lately was grovelling in yonder world? how changed! how ennobled! how glorified! Is this the soul that was once so overrun with the leprosy of sin! once so blind and dark! once so perverse and depraved! so feeble and weak! tormented with vain anxieties and trifling cares, or transported with empty joys and delusive prospects! is this the soul that had so many hard conflicts with temptations, that felt such shocks of jealousy, and so often languished under desponding fears of seeing this glorious place! O how changed! how free from every anxious care! unmolested by so much as a guilty thought! nobly triumphant over sin and sorrow, and all that is feared in its mortal state! And is this my once frail, mortal body? my incumbrance in yonder world! how amazingly transformed! how gloriously fashioned! O to what a pitch of excellency and bliss can almighty grace raise the meanest worm! and O! in what raptures of praise should I celebrate this grace through all eternity!' Thus may we think the glorified saint would express his wonder. But alas! we know just nothing about it. The sensations and language of immortals are beyond our comprehension. But,

Thirdly, We are just on the brink of this surprising state. A few years, perhaps a few moments, may open to our eyes these amazing scenes: the next day, or the next hour they may flash upon us; and O! where are we then? in what a strange world! among what new beings! and what shall we then be? O! how amazingly transformed! Should you see a clod from beneath your feet, rising and brightening into a star, or shining like the noon-day sun, the transformation would not be half so astonishing. Then we have done with all beneath the sun; all the lit-

tle things of this trifling world will vanish at once like a vapour; and all before us will be the most important and majestic realities. Therefore,

Fourthly, how astonishing is it that we should think so little of what is before us! that we should still stumble on in the dark, thoughtless of these approaching wonders! Ye sons of God, what are you doing, that you think no more of your relation to God, and your heavenly inheritance? If a large estate, or the government of a kingdom should fall to you to-morrow, and you were told of it beforehand, would it not always dwell upon your thoughts, and keep you awake this night with the eager prospect? What! would things comparatively low fix your attention? and can you be thoughtless of a glory and bliss that infinitely surpass all your present conceptions? And you, unregenerate sinners, though I cannot say you are near to glory, yet I may assure you, you are near to the eternal world, and all its solemn wonders: this night perhaps you may be there; and if you land there in your present condition, you are undone, you are ruined, you are inconceivably miserable forever. Therefore,

Fifthly, O sinners, why do you not labour to become the sons of God now while you may? Consider what prodigies of misery, what monuments of vengeance you will soon be, if you continue unregenerate! Alas! Sirs, it does not yet appear what you shall soon be, otherwise you could no more rest in your present case, than upon the top of a mast, or upon burning coals. And, poor creatures, have you a mind to be initiated into these horrid mysteries of wo, and be taught them by experience? Will not you believe the repeated declarations of eternal truth, that they are intolerably dreadful, and that, till you are the sons of God, till you are born again, and have the dispositions of children towards him, you cannot have a moment's security for escaping them? Alas! I must pity you; and I call upon all the children of God to pour out the tears of their compassion over you.

Sixthly, Let me call upon all the sons of God in this assembly to admire his love in conferring this dignity upon them. *Behold! what manner of love is this, that we shall be called the sons of God!* Consider what you were, guilty, rebellious creatures, condemned to everlasting tortures; and you will own, that to be just delivered from hell, though it had been by annihilation, would be an inconceivable favour for you: but for you to be the sons of God, to be made glorious beyond the reach of thought, to be trans-

formed into happy somethings that you can now form no ideas of, and this too at the expense of the blood of God ; what love is this ! Go home, and forget it if you can. I may as well bid you live without breathing if you can.

Seventhly, Let me conclude with this reflection : how honourable, how happy, how glorious, are the sons of God ! how immense their privileges ! how rich their inheritance ! Why then are they so backward to enter upon it ? how unaccountable, how absurd their eager attachment to this world, and their unwillingness to die ! Why so much afraid of ascending to their Father's house ? Why so shy of glory and bliss ? Why so fond of slavery and imprisonment ? O, my brethren, be always on the wing, ready for flight, and be always looking out and crying, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.

Sermon 34.

A SERMON ON THE NEW YEAR.

JER. XXVIII. 16.—*This year thou shalt die.**

WHILE we are entering upon the threshold of a new year, it may be proper for us to stand, and pause, and take a serious view of the occurrences that may happen to us this year, that we may be prepared to meet them. Future contingencies are indeed unknown to us ; and this ignorance is as agreeable to our present state, and as conducive to our improvement and happiness, as our knowledge of the things which it concerns us to know. But though we cannot predict to ourselves the particular events that may befal us, yet the events of life in general, in a vague indeterminate view, are not so contingent and unknowable as to leave no room for rational suppositions, and probable expectations. There are certain events which regularly happen to us every year, and therefore we may expect them this year. There are others sometimes occur in the compass of a year, and sometimes do not ; such are many of the blessings and afflictions of life ; of these we should be apprehensive, and prepare for them. And there are events which we know are before us, and we are sure

* This Sermon was preached at the college at Nassau-Hall, and consequently to a number of young persons, Jan. 1, 1761. The author died the 4th of February following.

they will occur: but at what particular time they will happen, whether this year or next, whether this day or to-morrow, is to us an utter uncertainty. Such is that interesting event, the close of the present life, and our entrance into eternity. That we must die, is as certain as that we now live; but the hour or year when, is kindly and wisely concealed from us, that we may be always ready, and stand in the posture of constant vigilant expectation; that we may not be surprised. But certainly it becomes us to reflect seriously upon the mere possibility of this event happening this year, and realize to ourselves those important consequences that result from this supposition. The mere possibility of this may justly affect us more than the certain expectation of any other futurity. And it is not only possible, but highly probable, death may meet some of us within the compass of this year. Yes, it is highly probable that if some prophet, like Jeremiah, should open to us the book of the divine decrees, one or other of us would there see our sentence, and the time of its execution fixed. *Thus saith the Lord—this year thou shalt die.* There some of us would find it written, 'This year thou shalt enjoy a series of prosperity, to try if the goodness of God will lead thee to repentance.' Others might read this melancholy line, 'This year shall be to thee a series of afflictions; this year thou shalt lose thy dearest earthly support and comfort; this year thou shalt pine away with sickness, or agonize with torturing pain, to try if the kind severities of a father's rod will reduce thee to thy duty.' Others, I hope, would read the gracious decree, 'This year thy stubborn spirit, after long resistance, shall be sweetly constrained to bow to the despised gospel of Christ. This year shalt thou be born a child of God, and an heir of happiness, which the revolution of years shall never, never terminate. O happy and glorious event! May we hope this mercy is reserved among the secrets of heaven for any thoughtless impenitent sinner among us! And that the decree will bring forth this year! this year which finds us in a dead sleep, stupidly careless of our everlasting interest, and which, if like the preceding, will be a season of thoughtless impenitence and presumptuous security! Others perhaps would read this tremendous doom, 'This year my spirit, so long resisted, shall cease to strive with thee; this year I will give thee up to thine own heart's lusts, and swear in my wrath thou shalt not enter into my rest.' O! dismal sentence! None can equal it in terror but one, and that is, *depart*

from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire: and the former is an infallible presage of the latter. Others (O! let our souls dwell upon the thought!) would probably find the doom of the false prophet Hananiah pronounced against them: *Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die.*

This year you may die, for your life is the greatest uncertainty in the world. You have no assurance of another year, another day, or even another moment.

This year you may die, because thousands have died since the last new year's day; and this year will be of the same kind with the last: the duration of mortals; a time to die. The causes of death, both in the human constitution and in the world without, will exist and operate in this year as well as in the last.

This year you may die; for thousands of others will die: it is certain they will, and why may not you? What peculiar security have you to confide in?

This year you may die, though you are young; for the regions of the dead have been crowded with persons of your age; and no age is the least security against the stroke of death.

This year you may die, though you are now in health and vigour, and your constitution seems to promise a long life; for thousands of such will be hurried into the eternal world this year, as they have been in years past. The principles of death may be even now working within you, notwithstanding the seeming firmness of your constitution; and you may be a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, sooner than the invalid whose life is apparently near its close.

This year you may die, though you are full of business, though you have projected many schemes, which it may be the work of years to execute, and which afford you many bright and flattering prospects. Death will not consult your leisure, nor be put off till another year, that you may accomplish your designs. Thousands have died before you, and will die this year amidst their golden prospects, and while spinning out their eternal schemes. And what has happened to them may happen to you

This year you may die, though you have not yet finished your education, nor fixed in life, but are preparing to appear in the world, and perhaps elated with the prospect of the figure you will make in it. Many such abortive students are now in the dust.

Many that had passed through a laborious course of preparation for public life, and had inspired their friends, as well as themselves, with high hopes, have been snatched away as they were just stepping upon the stage: and this may be your doom also.

This year you may die, though you are not prepared for it. When death shows you his warrant under the great seal of Heaven, it will be no excuse to plead, 'I am not ready.' Though the consequence of your dying unprepared will be your everlasting ruin, yet that dreadful consideration will have no weight to delay the execution.

This year you may die, though you deliberately delay your preparation, and put it off to some future time. You may fix upon the next year, or the decline of life, as the season for religion; but that time may never be at your disposal. Others may live to see it, but you may be ingulfed in the boundless ocean of eternity before it arrives, and your time for preparation may be over forever.

This year you may die, though you are unwilling to admit the thought. Death does not slacken his pace towards you, because you hate him, and are afraid of his approach. Your not realizing your latter end as near, does not remove it to a greater distance. Think of it or not, you must die: your want of thought can be no defence; and you know not how soon you may feel what you cannot bear to think of.

This year you may die, though you may strongly hope the contrary, and flatter yourself with the expectation of a length of years. You will not perhaps admit the thought of a short abortive life; but notwithstanding this, you may be a lifeless corpse before this year finishes its revolution.

Thus it appears very possible, that one or other of us may die this year. Nay, it is very probable, as well as possible, if we consider that it is a very uncommon, and almost unprecedented thing, that not one should die in a whole year out of such an assembly as this. More than one have died the year past, who made a part of our assembly last new year's day. Therefore let each of us (for we know not on whom the lot may fall) realize this possibility, this alarming probability, 'This year I may die.'

And what if you should? Surely you may be startled at this question: for O! the surprising change! O! the important consequences!

If you should die this year, then all your doubts, all the anxieties of blended hopes and fears about your state and character will terminate forever in full conviction. If you are impenitent sinners, all the artifices of self-flattery will be able to make you hope better things no longer; but the dreadful discovery will flash upon you with the resistless blaze of intuitive evidence. You will see, you will feel yourselves such. If you lie under the condemnation of the divine law, you will no longer be able to flatter yourselves with better hopes: the execution of the penalty will sadly convince you of the tremendous truth. To dispute it would be to dispute the deepest heart-felt sensations of the most exquisite misery. But, on the other hand, if your fears and doubts are the honest anxieties of a sincere, self-diffident heart, ever jealous of itself, and afraid of every mistake in a matter of such vast importance, you will meet with the welcome demonstration of your sincerity, and of your being unquestionably the favourites of Heaven. Sensation will afford you conviction; and you will believe what you see. In short, the possibility that this year may be your last, may be joyful tidings to you. If you die this year, this year you shall be in heaven, imparadised in the bosom of God. And is it possible your salvation is so near! Transporting thought!

It would be easy to enumerate several happy consequences of death with regard to those who have spent their life in preparation for it; and the nearness of death, instead of striking them with terror, may heighten the transport of expectation. It would afford me no small pleasure to trace those blessed consequences, and it would be an act of kindness and compassion to the heirs of heaven, many of whom go on mourning and trembling even towards the regions of happiness, as though they were going to the place of execution, and anticipate but very little of those infinite pleasures which are so near at hand. But I intend to devote the present hour chiefly to the service of a part, perhaps the greater part of my hearers, who are in a more dangerous and alarming situation, I mean such who may die this year, and yet are not prepared; such who are as near to hell as they are to death, and consequently stand in need of the most powerful and immediate applications, lest they be undone forever beyond recovery.

To you therefore, my dear brethren, my fellow-mortals, my fellow-candidates for eternity, whose everlasting state hangs in a dread suspense, who have a secret conviction that you are not qual-

ified for admission into the kingdom of heaven, and who cannot promise yourselves that you shall not sink into the infernal pit this year, but upon this supposition, which is the most precarious and doubtful in the world, namely, that you shall live out another year; to you I would address myself with affectionate tenderness, and yet with plainness and pungency. And I beg your most solemn attention to an affair of infinite moment, to which you may not have another year to attend.

This year you may die: and should you die this year, you will be forever cut off from all the pleasures of life. Then farewell, an everlasting farewell to all the mirth and gaiety, the tempting amusements and vain delights of youth. Farewell to all the pleasures you derive from the senses, and all the gratifications of appetite. This year the sun may lose his lustre as to you; and all the lovely prospects of nature may become a dismal blank. To you music may lose all her charms, and die away into everlasting silence; and all the gratifications of the palate may become insipid. When you lie in the cold grave, you will be as dead to such sensations as the clay that covers you. Then farewell to all the pompous but empty pleasures of riches and honours. The pleasures both of enjoyment and expectation from this quarter will fail forever. But this is not all.

If you should die this year, you will have no pleasures, no enjoyments to substitute for those you will lose. Your capacity and eager thirst for happiness will continue, nay, will grow more strong and violent in that improved adult state of your nature. And yet you will have no good, real or imaginary, to satisfy it; and consequently the capacity of happiness will become a capacity of misery; and the privation of pleasure will be positive pain. Can imagination feign any thing more wretched than a creature formed for the enjoyment of the infinite good, pining away forever with hungry raging desires, without the least degree of gratification! banished at once from the supreme good, and from all the created enjoyments that were wont to be poorly substituted in his stead! Yet this may be your case in the short compass of the following year. O! what a terrible change! What a prodigious fall!

Should you die this year, all your hopes and prospects as to a future life will perish abortive. Several of you now are in a state of education, preparing to enter upon the stage of the world; and you are perhaps often pleasing yourselves

with gay and magnificent dreams about the figure you will make upon it. You may be planning many schemes to be accomplished in the several periods of a long life: and are perhaps already anticipating in idea the pleasure, the profit, or the honour you expect to derive from their execution. In these fond hopes your affectionate parents, friends, and teachers conour with generous pleasure But, alas! in the swift revolution of this beginning year, all these sanguine expectations and pleasing prospects may vanish into smoke. Youth is the season of promise, full of fair blossoms; but these fair blossoms may wither, and never produce the expected fruits of maturity. It may perhaps be the design of Heaven, that after all the flattering hopes and projects, and after all the pains and expense of a liberal education, you shall never appear upon the public stage; or that you shall vanish away like a phantom, as soon as you make your appearance. Certainly then you should extend your prospects beyond the limits of mortality; extend them into that world, where you will live to execute them, without the risk of a disappointment! Otherwise,

If you die this year, you will not only be cut off from all the flattering prospects of this life, but from all hope entirely, and forever. If you die in your sins, you will be fixed in an unchangeable state of misery; a state that will admit of no expectation but that of uniform, or rather ever-growing misery; a state that excludes all hopes of making a figure, except as the monuments of the vindictive justice of God, and the deadly effects of sin. How affecting is the idea of a promising youth cut off from the land of the living useless and hopeless in both worlds! fallen from the summit of hope into the gulf of everlasting despair! Yet this may be your doom, my dear youth, your doom this very year, if you should die in your sins.

If you should die this year, then all the ease and pleasure you now derive from thoughtlessness, self-flattery, and suppressing the testimony of your consciences, will forever be at an end. You will then be obliged to view yourselves in a just light, and to know the very worst of your condition. The secret plaudits of self-flattery will be forever silenced, and conscience will recover itself from that state of insensibility into which you have cast it by repeated violences, and, as exasperated by your ill treatment, it will become your everlasting tormentor; it will do nothing but accuse and upbraid you forever: you will never more

be able to entertain so much as one favourable thought of yourselves. And what a wretched state will this be! for a man to be self-condemned! to disapprove of his whole past conduct! to be pleased with nothing in himself, but heartily, though with horror, to concur in the condemning sentence of the supreme Judge, and the whole creation! to esteem himself a fool, a sinner, a mean sordid wretch; an enemy to himself, and the whole universe; a self-destroyer, an outcast from all happiness, and from the society of all happy beings; an unlovely, odious, useless, miserable, despairing creature forever! O miserable situation! Does it not alarm you to think you may be so near it?

If you should die this year, you will be deprived forever of all the means of salvation. All these are confined to the present life, and have no place in the world of eternal punishment. There the thunders of the divine law roar; but the gentle voice of the gospel never sounds. There the Lion of the tribe of Judah rends the prey; but never exhibits himself as a Lamb that was slain, an atonement for sin, and the Saviour of the guilty. There conscience exerts its power, not to excite the medicinal anguish of kindly repentance, but the hopeless horrors of everlasting despair. There Jehovah works, but not to enable the sinner to work out his own salvation, but to touch all the springs of painful sensation, and open all the sources of misery in the criminal. There mercy no more distributes her bounties, but justice reigns in her awful rigours. There the sanctifying Spirit no more communicates his purifying, all-healing influences, but sin, the great Apollyon, diffuses its deadly poison. In a word, when you leave this state of trial, all the discipline of the present state, all your advantages for salvation, all the means of grace, and all the encouragements of hope will be forever removed out of your reach; and consequently all possibility of your salvation will cease forever; for when the necessary means are taken away, the end becomes utterly impossible. Therefore,

If you should die this year, all your hopes of heaven will vanish forever. No more happiness for you! You have received your portion in this life, a few years of sordid, unsatisfactory happiness; and an entire eternity of misery, permanent, exquisite, consummate misery follows behind! No more honour for you, but shame and everlasting contempt. No more intellectual amusements and pleasing studies! no more gentle beams of science! but the blackness of darkness forever! intense pouring upon your

hopeless wretchedness ! tormenting recollections of your past folly and madness in voluntarily rushing into the pit ! No agreeable companion ! no sympathizing friend ! no relaxation ! no pleasing exercise ! no encouraging prospects ! no comforting reviews ! no friendly intercourse with heaven ! no token of love ! no gift of grace from the Father of mercy ! none of the conscious joys of self-approbation ! no hope in the future ! no relief from the past ! no refuge, no escape, at the expense of existence, into the gulf of annihilation ! but above, an angry God and a lost heaven ! behind, a mis-spent life and opportunities of salvation irrecoverably lost ! within, a guilty remorseful conscience, an implacable self-tormentor ! around, malignant enraged ghosts, mutual tormentors ! before, an eternity of hopeless misery, extending infinitely beyond the ken of sight ! O ! tremendous doom ! who can bear the thought ?

And is it possible it should be so near to any of us ? Where is the unhappy creature, that we may all drop our tears over him ? Where is he ? Rather, where is he not ? An impenitent sinner is almost every where to be found ; and that is the wretched creature who stands every moment upon the slippery brink of this horrible precipice ; and this year, nay this hour, for what mortals or angels know, he may be thrown down, ingulfed and lost forever.

And is this a safe situation for you, thoughtless, fool-hardy mortals ! Does it become you in such a situation to be cheerful, merry, and gay ; or busy, restless, and laborious in the pursuits of this transitory life ? Does it become you to dread nothing but the disasters and calamities of the present state, or spin out your eternal schemes of grandeur, riches, or pleasure, in hopes to accomplish them within the narrow uncertain limits of time allotted to you ? Alas ! before another year has run its hasty round, the world and all that it contains, all its pursuits and enjoyments, all its cares and sorrows, may be as insignificant to you as the grandeur of Cesar, or the riches of the world before the flood. Earthly riches or poverty, liberty or slavery, honour or disgrace, joy or sorrow, sickness or health, may in this year become as little your concern, and be as much nothing to you as to your coffin, or the dust that shall cover it, or to Judas that has been gone to his own place above seventeen hundred years.

Does it not rather become you to turn your thoughts to another inquiry, " Is it possible for me to escape this impending dan-

ger? Where, how, whence may I obtain deliverance?" If you are not desirous seriously to attend to this inquiry, it will be to no purpose for me to solve it: to you it will appear as a solemn trifle, or an impertinent episode. But if you will lay it to heart, if you will, as it were, give me your word that you will pay a proper regard to it, I shall enter upon the solution with the utmost alacrity.

I assure you then, in the first place, your case is not yet desperate, unless you choose to make it so; that is, unless you choose to persist in carelessness and impenitence, as you have hitherto done If you now begin to think seriously upon your condition, to break off from your sins, and attend in good earnest upon the means appointed for your salvation, there is hope concerning you; yes, miserable sinners! there is hope that this year, which now finds you in so deplorable a state, will introduce you into another, under the blessing of Heaven, safe from all danger, and entitled to everlasting happiness.

I presume you all know so well the external means you should use for your salvation, that I need not particularly direct you to them. You all know that prayer, reading, and hearing the word of God, meditation upon divine things, free conference with such as have been taught by experience to direct you in this difficult work; you all know, I say, that these are the means instituted for your conversion: and if you had right views of things, and a just temper towards them, you would hardly need instruction or the least persuasion to make use of them. But to give you such views, and inspire you with such a temper, this is the difficulty. O! that I knew how to undertake it with success! I can only give you such directions as appear to me proper and salutary; but it is the almighty power of God alone that can give them force and efficacy.

You must learn to think, to think seriously and solemnly upon your danger, and the necessity of a speedy escape. You must retire from the crowd, from talk, dissipation, business, and amusement, and converse with yourselves alone in pensive solitude.

You must learn to think patiently upon subjects the most melancholy and alarming, your present guilt and depravity, and your dreadful doom so near at hand, if you continue in your present condition. The mind, fond of ease, and impatient of such mortifying and painful thoughts, will recoil, and fly off, and seek for refuge in every trifle: but you must arrest and confine it to

these disagreeable subjects ; you must force upon it this medicinal pain, as you often force your stomach, when your health requires it. There is not any moroseness in this advice ; no ill-natured design upon your pleasure and happiness. On the other hand, it is intended to procure you more pleasure and happiness than you can possibly obtain any other way : it is intended to prevent many sorrowful days and years, nay a complete eternity of misery. The alternative proposed to you is not, whether you shall feel the bitter anguish of repentance, or not ; whether you shall be pensive and serious, or not ; whether you shall think upon gloomy and alarming subjects, or not : This is not at all the state of the case ; for you must feel the sorrows of repentance : you must be thoughtful and pensive ; you must confine your minds to subjects of terror : you must, whether you will or not ; it is utterly unavoidable. But the only alternative proposed to your choice is, whether you will voluntarily submit to the kindly, hopeful, medicinal, preventive sorrows of repentance in this state of trial, which will issue in everlasting joy ; or be forced to submit to the despairing pangs, and useless destructive horrors of too late a repentance in the eternal world ; which will only torment you, but not save you ; which will be your punishment, and not a mean of your reformation, or a preparative for happiness. Whether you will confine your thoughts for a time to the contemplation of your present miserable circumstances, while hope eradiates even the darkest gloom of discouragement, and the gospel opens such bright and inviting prospects beyond those melancholy views that now first present themselves to your thoughts ; or whether you will choose to pine away a doleful eternity in sullen, intense, hopeless porings upon your remediless misery, in pale reviews of past folly, and shocking surveys of endless ages of wo before you. This is the true state of the case ; and can you be at a loss what choice to make ! Does not the voice of reason, the voice of conscience, of self-interest and self-love, as well as the voice of God, direct you to choose a few serious, sad, solemn, sorrowful, penitent hours now, rather than to invert the choice and to purchase a few hours of presumptuous ease at the expense of a wretched, despairing eternity ? O choose life, that you may live. While you indulge a trifling levity of mind, and a roving dissipation of thought, there is no hope you will ever seriously attend to your most important interest, or use the means of grace in earnest. Hence it is that I have made it so much my

endeavour to day to make you serious and thoughtful. To enforce this, let me repeat what I think cannot but have some effect; especially as it comes not from the priesthood, but the court; and from a courtier as eminent as England ever boasted.

'Ah! my friends! while we laugh, all things are serious round about us. God is serious, who exerciseth patience towards us: Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us: the Holy Ghost is serious who striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts: the holy Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious things in the world; the holy sacraments represent the most serious and awful matters: the whole creation is serious in serving God and us: all that are in heaven and hell are serious:—How then can we be gay?'

I pray you, my dear brethren, yield an immediate compliance. Do not delay this great affair for another year, till you are sure you shall live another year. You may perhaps have time enough before you to work out your salvation, if you immediately begin to improve it: but, if you loiter, you may perish for want of time: the riches of the world will not be able then to redeem one of those precious hours you now squander away.

Let me now make you one of the most reasonable, salutary, and advantageous proposals that heaven itself can make to you: and that is, that you endeavour to enter upon this new year as new creatures. Let the old man with his affections and lusts die with the old year. *Let the time past of your life more than suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh. What profit had you then in those things of which you should now be ashamed?* How shocking the thought that your old guilt should follow you into the new year, and haunt you in future times! O begin this year as you would wish to end your life! Begin it so as to give hopes that your future time will be so spent as to render death harmless, and even welcome to you.

Let the possibility suggested in my text have due weight with you: This year you may die.

But perhaps some of you may be inverting this consideration, and whispering to yourselves, "This year I may not die:" and therefore there is no immediate necessity of preparation for death. But what if you should not die this year, if you still delay the great work for which your time is given you? Alas! if you persist in this, one would think it can give you but little pleasure whether you die this year or not? What end will your life answer,

but to add to your guilt, and increase your punishment? What safety can another year afford you, when you must die at last? What valuable end do you intend to answer in future life? Do you purpose to spend this year as you have your past years? What! in offending your God! abusing his mercies! neglecting the precious seasons of grace! hardening yourselves more and more in impenitence! adding sin to sin, and treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! Is it worth your while to live for such horrid, preposterous purposes as these? Can you wish for another year with these views? Could you venture to pray for it? Will the prayer bear to be put into words? Come, put on the hardiness of an infernal ghost, that you may be able to support yourselves under the horror of the sound. "Thou supreme Excellence! Thou Author of my being, and all my powers! Thou Father of all my mercies! Thou righteous Judge of the world! I have spent ten, twenty, or thirty years in displeasing thee and ruining myself; but I am not yet satisfied with the pleasures of such a conduct. Grant me, I pray thee, another year to spend in the same manner. Grant me more mercies to abuse; more time to mispend; more means of grace to neglect and profane." Could you now fall on your knees, and present such petitions to Heaven? Surely you could not. Surely your frame would shudder; nay, would not the heavens gather blackness, and the earth tremble at the sound! But have your temper and practice no language? Language expresses the thoughts and intentions of the mind; and are not the habitual temper and practice a more certain discovery of the thoughts and intentions than mere words? words, which may be spoken without a thought, or in a passion, and which may soon be heartily retracted? But the temper and practice is a steady and sure rule of judging, and decisive of a man's predominant character? Therefore, while your temper and practice are agreeable to such a prayer: that is, while you are disposed to spend your time that God gives you in sin and impenitence, you are perpetually insulting Heaven with such petitions, and that too in a manner much more expressive and strong than if you should utter them in words. And can you quietly bear the thought of this horrid blasphemy, which you are constantly breathing out against Heaven? Can you wish and pray for another year for this purpose? What though you should not die this year? Will this exempt you from death in another, or from the punishment of a mispent life? Alas! no; this will only render

you a greater criminal, and a more miserable wretch in eternity. One year of sinning will make a dreadful addition to your account.

Therefore conclude, every one for himself, 'It is of little importance to me whether I die this year, or not; but the only important point is, that I make a good use of my future time, whether it be longer or shorter.' This, my brethren, is the only way to secure a happy new year: a year of time, that will lead the way to an happy eternity.

Sermon 35.

An Enrolment of our Names in Heaven the Noblest Source of Joy.

LUKE x. 20. *Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.**

THIS is the answer Christ gave to his disciples, when returned from their mission, flushed with victory over the most mighty and most malignant enemies, the infernal powers. *Lord*, say they, *even the devils are subject to us, through thy name.* This they probably mentioned with a tincture of vanity, and were secretly proud of their new power, which their Master had given them. Though they owned it was his gift, they gloried in it, as conferring some new honour and dignity upon themselves. And probably like the rest of their countrymen, their heads were filled with notions of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and his conquests over the other nations of the earth in favour of the Jews; and inferred that they should have an irresistible power over their enemies on earth, from the power they had been enabled to exercise over evil spirits, so much more mighty, and seemingly unconquerable.

Their Lord and Master, among other things in his answer, checks this secret vanity, and points out to them a superior cause of joy. *Rejoice not in this*; that is, rejoice not so much as you do, rejoice not principally in this, *that the spirits* (that is, evil spirits) *are subject to you*; *but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*; as if he should say, "Though you may

* A sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, Jan. 14, 1759.

safely rejoice in the victory you have obtained through my name over the powers of hell, yet you ought to take care that it be not a vain, selfish, carnal joy, a joy springing from the gratification of your own ambition. And take care also, that it does not run into excess: for I will shew you a much greater cause of joy than even this; and that is, that your names are written in heaven. It is possible, that while you are casting the devil out of the bodies of others, your own souls may be under his power, and you may be his miserable slaves forever. But since your names are written in heaven, you are safe; and that is cause of joy indeed. Rejoice in this above all other things."

How should we rejoice, and perhaps boast, if the mighty powers of hell were subject unto us, and we could make them fly at a word! But the meanest christian is more happy than this, and has cause of greater joy.

For the farther explication of the text, it is only necessary to inquire, what is meant by their names being written in heaven?

Heaven is here compared to a city or corporation, in which a list or record is kept of all the citizens or freemen who are entitled to its privileges and immunities. And therefore, to have our names written in heaven, signifies to be citizens, or freemen of the heavenly city; that is, to have a right to an inheritance there, and to all its privileges and enjoyments.

This naturally suggests a very important inquiry, the decision of which may hold us all in an anxious suspense: "How may I know (may each of us ask) whether my unworthy name be written in heaven? who can open and read the records of heaven, and shew me whether my name is registered there?"

I answer, This is a secret that may be discovered; for all that have their names written in heaven, may be distinguished by their characters, their temper, and practice, while upon earth. And their characters are such as these:

1. They are deeply sensible of the vanity of all earthly things, and that heaven alone is a sufficient portion and happiness. All that are registered as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have a superlative esteem of that privilege, and count all things but loss in comparison of it. Matt. vii 24—26. and xiii. 45, 46. And is this your character? Are your hearts in heaven? or are your highest affections confined to the earth?

2. All that have their names written in heaven have a heavenly nature; a nature very different from that of the men of this

world, and like that of the citizens of heaven. And is this your temper? or is it earthly and sensual?

3. All that have their names written in heaven have a peculiar love for all their fellow citizens, who are heirs of heaven. They love them as members of the same corporation with themselves. 1 John iii. 14.

4. If your names are written in heaven it is the chief business and concern of your life to obtain an interest in heaven. This is not the object of languid, lazy wishes, or of lukewarm, spiritless prayers; but of your vigorous, anxious, persevering desires. And do you thus seek the kingdom of heaven? Matt. x. 12. Luke xvi. 16.

These marks must suffice at present to assist you in self-examination; and I beg you would bring them to your hearts, and see if they will stand this test.

If your names are written in heaven, then my text authorises me to tell you, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. But on the other hand,

If your names are not written in heaven, there is nothing in the world that can happen to you, that can be a cause of rational lasting joy to you.

I. If your names are written in heaven, this is the greatest cause of joy you can possibly have; a joy that may swallow up every other joy. This will appear by an induction of particulars.

Are you rich in this world? Has God blessed your industry and frugality, so that you are in easy, affluent circumstances? This is cause of joy and gratitude to God, as it furnishes you with the materials of earthly happiness, frees you from many anxieties and painful wants, and puts it in your power to enjoy the generous pleasure of doing good with your substance. But what is this, when compared with the blessing of the sanctified use of riches, and the assurance that God has given you, that all things shall work together for your good? what is this to the unsearchable riches of Christ and that fulness of grace and glory, in which you have an interest? Rejoice more in this than in thousands of gold and silver.

Or if you are not in affluent circumstances, are you above extreme want, and able by your labour and industry to provide yourselves and your dependents with the necessaries of life?

This is the happiness of most, even of the poor in our country; and this is cause of joy. But what is this to the happiness of having provision made for your subsistence through everlasting ages? Is it not superior cause of joy, that when you are stript of all the enjoyments of the present life, you shall also be delivered from all its wants and labours, and shall not only have a bare sufficiency, but a rich overflowing abundance of happiness, equal to the capacities of your souls in their highest enlargements? In this you may warrantably rejoice, and you cannot run into excess.

Do you enjoy health of body? In this rejoice: but how trifling a cause of joy is this to that of your souls being in health and prospering, and bearing the symptoms of immortal life and vigour!

Are your bodies free from diabolical possession? Rejoice not so much in this, but rather rejoice that the devil is cast out of your souls, and that you are not under his spiritual tyranny.

Are you happy in your friends and relations, and every domestic blessing? Rejoice not so much in this as that you have the most honourable relations and friends in heaven. God is your father; Christ is your Saviour, your elder brother, your friend; the Holy Ghost is your sanctifier: the angels and all the saints are your fellow-servants, your brethren of the same household of God.

Do you rejoice in the salvation of your country, and that you are delivered from the hands of your savage and perfidious enemies on earth? Rather rejoice that you are delivered from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and from the condemnation of the divine law.

Do you rejoice that our forces have been victorious over our enemies? Rather rejoice in the victory which the Captain of your salvation has gained for you over your spiritual enemies. Rather rejoice in the victory you are enabled to gain over sin, Satan and the world, through the blood of the Lamb. Rather rejoice to see your lusts slain, or at least mortally wounded, and dying in your hearts.

Do you rejoice that you have the prospect of living in safety and peace in your country? Rather rejoice that you have peace of conscience, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ; and that you shall enter into everlasting peace whenever you leave this restless world.

Do you rejoice that your earthly possessions, your property and liberty are safe? Rather rejoice that your heavenly inheritance is safe; and that whatever becomes of the kingdoms of the earth, you have a kingdom that cannot be shaken, eternal in the heavens.

Do you rejoice that you live under the government of a good king? and that you enjoy the blessings of our happy constitution? This is a peculiar happiness indeed; but rejoice not so much in this, as that you are the subjects of the King of kings, and under a dispensation of grace, and the government of a Mediator. *The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice.* Psalm xcvii. 1. Rejoice, above all, in this, that you and all your affairs are under the direction of a divine hand, that will manage all for your good. Rejoice that ere long you shall be admitted to the court of the heavenly King, and see him in all his glory.

Do you rejoice that your life is prolonged, while so many are dropping into the grave around you? Rather rejoice that you are not to live always in this most wretched world. Rejoice that death itself, your last enemy, will not be able to do you any lasting injury, but only convey you home to your Father's house, and the full possession of your heavenly inheritance.

Do you rejoice that you enjoy the gospel and the means of salvation, and that these invaluable blessings are not likely to be torn from you by the hands of Indian savages and Popish idolaters? This indeed is cause of rejoicing; but how much more ought you to rejoice that the gospel and the means of salvation are made effectual by divine grace for your conversion and sanctification! Many enjoy them as well as you, to whom they are of no service, but an occasion of more aggravated guilt and ruin.

Let me therefore persuade you to rejoice, not only as a privilege, but as a duty. God enjoins it upon you by the same authority by which he requires you to pray, or to love himself or your neighbour. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.* Psalm xxxii. 11. *Rejoice evermore: rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice.* 1 Thess. v. 16. It is decent and congruous that you should now rejoice in that, in which you shall rejoice forever. And, on the other hand, it is highly unbecoming that you should walk towards heaven melancholy and dejected, as if you were going to the place of execution. Let sinners be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, who stand every moment on the slippery brink of eter-

nal misery. Sorrow and lamentation become their circumstances. But will you always mourn and droop, who stand every moment on the threshold of heaven, and know not but you may be there before another sun shall rise? how indecent is this! Therefore rejoice with all your hearts, that your worthless names are written in heaven. This is greater cause of joy than if they were registered in the annals of fame, or among princes of the blood royal.

And do not excuse yourselves from this agreeable duty, by saying, "I would rejoice, if I were sure my name is written in heaven: but, alas! I am not." For is not this uncertainty your own fault! the effect of your own negligence? Besides have you not some cheerful hopes and probabilities, and even some transient assurance? and is not this cause of joy to creatures that deserve to be left under the pangs of everlasting despair?

Let me advance a step farther, and tell you, that you should rejoice that your names are written in heaven, not only more than in all other causes of joy, but also in opposition to all causes of sorrow.

What though you are poor in this world, when the heavenly inheritance is yours? That you are despised among men, when you have the honour of being the sons of God? That you are weak, or sick and pained in body, when your souls are recovering from the deadly disease of sin? That you are the slaves of men, when you are free of the heavenly city, members of the same corporation with the armies of heaven, and sharers in the liberty of the sons of God? That your enemies should prove victorious over you upon earth, when you shall certainly overcome at last? That your mortal relations and friends die, when your heavenly Father and all your spiritual kindred live, and you cannot be bereaved of them? In short, what though you endure all the afflictions that can crowd upon one man in the present life, when they are all short and transitory, and work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and when you will soon arrive in the land of rest, beyond the reach of every misery? In spite of all these calamities, rejoice; *rejoice and be exceeding glad, since your names are written in heaven.*

But I must proceed to address another class of hearers; and to them I must say,

II. If your names are not written in heaven, you can have no cause of solid, rational, and lasting joy in any thing. This also I shall illustrate by an induction of particulars.

Rejoice not that you are rich, or at least enjoy the comforts of life, while you are destitute of spiritual and everlasting riches. Will it be any pleasure to you to pass from a splendid well-furnished house into the regions of horror and darkness? From faring sumptuously every day, to suffer the extremities of eternal want? From gay and merry company, to the society of the lost spirits in hell? From all the luxuries of life, to weep, and wail, and gnash the teeth forever? From wearing silks and laces, and every form of finery, to be wrapt in sheets of infernal flame? Alas! what joy can you take in all the advantages that riches can give you, while you must be stript of them all so soon, and feel a terrible reverse? Many who are styled worshipful, honourable, and bear nothing but titles of dignity among men, are vile, despicable creatures in the sight of God, and must ere long sink into shame and everlasting contempt. Many a body adorned with whatever riches can procure, is animated by a poor worthless soul, full of sin, and void of the beauties of holiness. And can you rejoice in such trifles as these? A man that has a gangrened foot may as well rejoice that it is covered with a silken plaister; or a criminal, that he is carried to the gallows in a coach of state.

Besides, remember, how hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God! It is an human impossibility; but it is not impossible to Omnipotence. As riches increase, temptations increase; temptations to love the world more, and to think less of heaven; temptations from pride, flattery, hurry, company, &c. And can you rejoice that your salvation is made more difficult? that you, who are apt to stumble at straws, have mountains thrown up in your way? Alas! if this were rightly considered, would the wealthy and affluent be so resolute and eager in the pursuit of riches?

What though you are in good business, and prospering in the world, while you are not doing the work of your salvation, nor carrying on a trade for heaven, and your hurry of business is a great occasion of this pernicious neglect?

What though you enjoy health of body, while your souls are dead in trespasses and sins, and your health is no security against death or hell? What though you enjoy friends and relatives, while the great God is your enemy? Or mirth and pleasure,

when they will end in eternal howlings, and you will be upbraided with them another day, like Dives, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time didst enjoy thy good things?*

What though the French and Indians are routed? alas! the devil and your sins are still lords over you! What though your country is safe, when you shall stay in it but a very little time, and you have no place prepared for you in heaven? What though you are the free-born descendants of Britons, and never were in bondage to any man? alas! you are the slaves of sin. What though you live under the government of the best of kings, while you are the captives of the prince of darkness, and the King of heaven is your enemy? What though your bodies are not exposed to the sword of your fellow-mortals, when you are liable every moment to the sword of divine justice? What though you are safe, as to your outward estate, when your immortal souls are in danger? *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* or to enjoy the gospel, while you receive no advantage from it, but abuse it to your more aggravated ruin? What avails it that God is merciful, when you have no share in his mercy, and never will, if you continue in your vain, carnal joy? That Christ died for sinners, while you wilfully exclude yourselves from the blessed effects of his death?

In short, what upon earth, or even in heaven, can afford you any pleasure or rational joy, while your names are not written in heaven, and you are not using earnest endeavours to be admitted citizens there? alas! your case calls for sighs, and tears, and sorrow, rather than joy. What have you to do with politics, news, and the fate of armies and kingdoms, while you know not whether you will be out of hell one day longer?

And as the joy of the righteous, in having their names written in heaven, may swallow every other joy, so your sorrow, on account of your names not being written there, may swallow up all other sorrows. Be sorrowful on this account, above all other things.

Have you lost your friends, your relatives, your estate? This is sad; but O! it is nothing to the loss of God, of heaven, and your souls. All will be lost ere long, if you continue in your present condition. Are you poor in this world? That is but a trifling affliction, compared with that everlasting poverty you must ere long suffer. Are you mean and despised by men? Alas! what is that to your being despised and abhorred by the God that made

you? Are you the slaves of men? This would be trifling, and you need not care for it, were it not that you are slaves to sin and Satan, and under the condemnation of the divine law. Are you disordered in body? That is nothing to the disorders of your souls. Are you afraid of natural death? alas! what is that to spiritual death, which has seized your souls, and the eternal death which is but just before you? In short, nothing in all the world ought so to distress and grieve you as this, That your names are not written in heaven.

Therefore, instead of vain rejoicing, and mirth, and gaiety, I must read to you the denunciation of Jesus Christ against you; *But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.* Luke vi. 24, 25.— and call upon you as the apostle James does, *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.* James v. 9. And again, *Be afflicted and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.* James iv. 9.

I can honestly assure you, I am no enemy to the pleasures of mankind. But it is because I love you, that I wish you may return home sad and sorrowful from this place; for I well know, you are forever undone, unless you turn to the Lord; and that you never will turn to him, without rending of your hearts, weeping, and mourning. Joel ii. 12.

If your joy and mirth were rational, I should say nothing against it; but is it not frenzy and madness to be merry in the chains of sin, under the wrath of God, and upon the brink of eternal ruin?

Is it not also dishonourable to God? It is as if you should tell him to his face, that you can be merry and happy without his favour, and that you care nothing for his displeasure.

I should not reprove your mirth, if it were harmless; but, alas! it will ruin you if you indulge it. For, let me tell you, such sinners as you cannot become converts, without alarming fears and deep sorrows. Without this you never will be in earnest in your religious endeavours.

You will tell me perhaps, "you see christians cheerful, and sometimes merry; and why may not you be so?" I answer, (1.) There is a great difference in your case and theirs; they have a lively hope of everlasting happiness; but you can have no hope

in your present condition. And may not they rejoice, while you have cause to mourn and weep? What would you think of a criminal under condemnation, if he allowed himself in that mirth and amusement, which may be lawful and becoming in others? (2.) The christians you know now are cheerful with good reason; but did you know any of them under their first convictions; were they cheerful then? then, when they received a sight of their sin and danger, and were in an awful suspense what would be their everlasting doom? Were they merry and gay while they saw themselves without a Saviour, and under the displeasure of God? No; then all was sadness, fear and sorrow. And this is what your case now requires. Can you expect the same cheerfulness in one under the power of a deadly disorder as in one recovering? or would it be becoming?

Finally, I should not endeavour to damp your joys and turn them into sorrow, if they would last. But oh! they will soon end, and nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will succeed. Look down into that hideous gulf, the prison of divine justice, where Dives and Judas, and thousands of sinners lie; and can you see no cheerful look, or hear one laugh among them? No, no: they have done with all joy; and must spend a miserable eternity in grief and tears. And will you not rather mourn in time, than mourn forever? will you choose now to receive your consolation? or will you not rather delay it till you have reason to rejoice?

To conclude: Suffer a friend to your best interests to prevail upon you to return home this evening sadly pensive and sorrowful, and to resolve you will never indulge yourselves in one hour's mirth and gaiety, till you have some reason to believe that your names are written in heaven. This is what your own interest requires; and if you refuse, you will unavoidably be sorry for it forever, when your sorrow can be of no service to you. Betake yourselves in serious sadness to the earnest use of all the means of salvation, and you have reason to hope God will have mercy upon you, and turn you to himself. Then you will have reason to rejoice, to rejoice in your temporal blessings, and especially because your names are written in heaven. And then God, and Christ, and angels will rejoice over you, and join in your joy.

Sermon 36.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL BY THE DIVINE POWER UPON THE SOULS OF MEN.*

2 COR. X. 4, 5. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

THIS restless world is now in an unusual ferment; kingdom rising up against kingdom, and nation against nation: magazines filling, arms brightening, cannons roaring, and human blood streaming, both by sea and land. These things engross the thoughts and conversation of mankind, and alarm their fears and anxieties. But there is another kind of war carrying on in the world; a war, the issue of which is of infinitely greater importance; a war of near six thousand years standing; that is, ever since the first grand rebellion of mankind against God; a war in which we are all engaged as parties, and in the result of which our immortal interest is concerned; though, alas! it engages but little of the attention and solicitude of the generality among us; I mean, the war which Jesus Christ has been carrying on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to reduce the rebellious sons of men to their duty, and redeem them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, from their wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is the design in which the apostles were embarked, and which St. Paul describes in the military style in my text. As some members of the Corinthian church had taken up a very low opinion of St. Paul, his design in the context is to raise the dignity of his apostolic office. And for that purpose, he describes in the military language the efficacy and success of those apostolic powers with which he was furnished for the propagation of christianity, and the reduction of the world into obedience to the gospel. Those powers were such as these; the power of working miracles to attest his divine commission; the

* A Sermon preached at Hanover, in Virginia, Oct. 17, 1756.

preaching of the doctrine of the cross, and the rod of discipline for the reformation of offenders; which in the hands of the apostles, seems to have been attended with the power of inflicting temporal judgments, and particularly bodily sicknesses; and which St. Paul here threatens to exercise upon such of the Corinthians as continued obstinate in their opposition to his ministry.

These powers he here calls weapons of war. This tent-maker and a few fishermen were sent out upon a grand expedition, in opposition to the united powers of Jews and Gentiles, of earth and hell. All the world, with their gloomy god, were ready to join against them. They were ready to oppose them with all the force of philosophy, learning, authority, threatenings, and all the cruel forms of persecution. For the christian cause in which these soldiers of Jesus Christ were engaged, was contrary to their lusts and prejudices, their honour, and secular interests. This opposition of the world to the gospel, the apostle also describes in the military style. Their lusts, prejudices, and interests, their vain imaginations and false reasonings, are so many strong holds and high things or castles in which they, as it were, fortify and entrench themselves. These they hold and garrison under the prince of darkness; in these they stand out in their rebellion against heaven, and fight against God, against his gospel, and against their own consciences. And with what weapons did the apostles attack these rebels in their strong holds! Not with carnal weapons, such as the heroes and conquerors of the world are wont to use, but with weapons of a spiritual nature, the force of evidence and conviction, the purity of their doctrines and lives, the terrors of the Lord, and the all-conquering love of a dying Saviour. With these weapons they encountered the allied powers of men and devils; with these they propagated the religion of their Master; and not with the sword, like Mahomet; or with the bloody artillery of persecution, like the church of Rome; or by the dragoonade, like the tyrants of France.

What unpromising weapons were these? What avails the light of evidence in a world that loves darkness rather than light, and where lust, prejudice, and interest generally prevail against truth and reason? Is the contemptible weapon of the cross likely to do execution? Are the unpopular mortifying doctrines of one that was crucified like a malefactor and a slave, likely to prevail against all the prejudices of education, the attachment of mankind to the religion of antiquity, established by law; the policy of priest-

craft ; the love of gain ; the powers of the world ; and the various oppositions of the depraved hearts of mankind ? Are such gentle and weak weapons as these likely to have any success ? Yes, these weapons, though not carnal, were mighty, resistless, all-conquering—but then you must observe, they were mighty through God. The excellency of the power was of God, and such unpromising arms were used on purpose to shew this. It was he that gave edge to the weapons, and force to the blow. Without the energy of his grace, they could have done nothing, even in the hands of apostles. But, by the might of his spirit, they became almighty, and carried all before them : these contemptible weapons, with his concurrence, pulled down strong holds ; cast down towering imaginations, and reasonings* that seemed impregnable, and demolished every high thing, every battery, castle, or citadel, that was erected against the knowledge of God, that knowledge of him which the gospel brought to light, and reduced every thought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. Sinners were brought not only to compliment Jesus with a bended knee, and profess subjection to him with their lips, but to bow their stubborn hearts to him, and let him reign in their affections. That gospel to which they were so averse, gained a complete victory over their minds ; their minds, which the Alexanders and Cesars of the world could not subdue ; and reduced not only their external conduct, but their thoughts ; not only some thoughts, but every thought, to the obedience of Christ. When God gives the commission, the stately walls of Jericho will fall, even at the feeble sound of rams' horns.

To bring into captivity, is generally understood in a bad sense, and signifies the carrying away of loyal subjects against their wills, into a foreign country, and there enslaving them to the enemy. But here it is a significant catachresis, and signifies the deliverance of sinners from the slavery of sin and Satan, and their restoration into a state of liberty, and into favour with God, and this too by their own free consent. And it is called a captivating, to intimate, that, though when the sinner submits he does it voluntarily, yet he had really made a strong resistance, and did not submit till sweetly constrained to it ; and that he looked upon his state of slavery to sin as a state of freedom, and was as unwilling to leave it as a free-born subject would be to be captivated and enslaved in an enemy's country.

* λογισμὸς.

I foresee I cannot take time to do justice to this copious subject. But I shall endeavour to comprise my thoughts in as little room as possible, in a few propositions, to which each head in my text may be reduced. And the whole will be but a short history of the revolt of mankind against the great God, their rightful Sovereign, and their miserable slavery to sin and Satan—of an important expedition set on foot and carried on by the ministry of the gospel, to recover them from their state of slavery, and reduce them to their obedience—of their various methods of opposition to this design ; or the various ways in which they fortify themselves against the attacks made upon them by divine grace for this end—of the issue of this siege, particularly the terms of surrender—and their consequent deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, and their willing subjection to their rightful Lord and Proprietor.

I. All mankind, in their present state of apostasy, have revolted from God, and surrendered themselves slaves to sin and Satan.

We might produce abundant evidence of this from the sacred writings ; but as the evidence from plain undeniable fact may be more convictive, I shall insist chiefly upon it. Mankind are secretly disaffected to God and his government in their hearts ; and hence they do not take pleasure in his service. They are not solicitous for the honour and dignity of his government. They will not bear the restraints of his authority, nor regard his law as the rule of their conduct, but will follow their own inclinations, let him prescribe what he will. Nay they have no disposition to return to their duty, or listen to proposals for reconciliation ; and hence they disregard the gospel (which is a scheme to bring about a peace) as well as the law. In short, they will not do any thing that God commands them, unless it suit their own corrupt inclinations ; and they will not abstain from any thing which he forbids, for his sake, if they have any temptation to it from their own lusts. These things, and a thousand more which might be mentioned, fix the charge of rebellion upon them. It is undeniable they are disaffected to his government in their hearts, whatever forced or complimental expressions of loyalty some of them may at times give him. Look into your own hearts, and take a view of the world around you, and you will find this is evidently the case.

But though they are thus disobedient to their rightful Sovereign, yet to sin and Satan, those usurping and tyrannical masters, they are the most tame and obsequious slaves. For these, they will go through the most sordid drudgery, for no other wages than death. For these, they will give up their most important interests, and exchange their souls, and their share in heaven, without any retaliation, but the sorry transitory pleasures of sin. Let temptation but beckon, they immediately take the signal, and obey. Let sin command them to hurt their souls and bodies, and perhaps their estates, with excessive drinking, the poor slaves comply. Let sin order them to swear, to lie, to defraud, they submit, though eternal damnation be the consequence. Let sin order them to pursue riches, honour, or sensual pleasures, through right and wrong, at the loss of their ease, the danger of their lives and the destruction of their souls, they engage in the drudgery, and toil all their days in it. Let sin forbid them to serve God, to attend seriously to his word, to pray to him importunately, in secret and in their families, to reflect upon their miserable condition, to repent and believe the gospel ; let sin but lay them under a prohibition to these things, they will cautiously refrain from them ; and all the arguments which God and man can use with them will have little or no weight. In short, let sin but order them to give up their interest in heaven, and run the risk of eternal ruin ; let sin but command them to neglect and disregard the God that made them, and the Saviour that died for them, they will venture upon the self-denying and destructive enterprize. They will do more for sin than they will do for the great God their rightful Sovereign and constant Benefactor. Sin has more influence with them than all the persuasions of parents, ministers, and their best friends ; nay, more influence than the love, the dying groans and agonies of a crucified Saviour. There is nothing so sacred, so dear or valuable in heaven, but they will give it up if sin requires them. Nothing so terrible in hell, but they will rush into, if sin sets them upon the desperate attempt. They are the most tame, unresisting captives to sin. Sin is an arbitrary, absolute, despotic tyrant over them ; and, which is most astonishing, they are not weary of its tyranny, nor do they pant and struggle for liberty. Liberty to them has lost its charms, and they hug their chains and love their bondage. Alas ! are there not many free-born Britons in this assembly, who are slaves in this sense ? slaves in a worse sense than the poorest negro

among us: slaves to sin, and consequently to Satan; for sin is commander in chief under the prince of darkness, the gloomy god of this world: it is by sin, as his deputy, that he exercises his power, and therefore sinners are in reality slaves to him! This, one would think, would be a shocking reflection to them, that they are slaves of the most malignant being in nature; a being not only malignant, but also very powerful; that they have broken off from the indulgent and equitable government of the Sovereign of the universe, and sold themselves slaves to such a lawless tyrannical usurper! But, alas! they do not resent the usurpation, nor struggle to throw off the yoke, and regain their liberty. They resign themselves voluntary slaves, and love their master and his drudgery.

This is a very melancholy, but, alas! it is a true history of human nature in its present state. Thus are mankind disaffected to the divine government, and held in a wretched captivity to sin and Satan. This is indeed a very dismal and threatening state, and we might tremble for the consequences had we no gospel to inform us of a plan of reconciliation. Here I may borrow the words of one of the greatest and best of christians.* "When we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God, and gone into rebellion against him; that were alienated and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, Well, and what became of the business? How did it issue? What was the event? and would expect to hear, Why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the earth opened and swallowed them up quick; yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear that fire and brimstone, flames and thunder-bolts came down instantly upon them, and destroyed them in a moment, who would not say, So I thought: who could expect better?" But what grateful astonishment may it raise in heaven and earth, to hear that their offended Sovereign has been so far from this, that he has sent his Son, his only Son, to die for them, in order to bring about a peace! and that,

II. He has set on foot an important expedition, and is carrying it on from age to age by the ministry of the gospel, to recover these rebels from their voluntary slavery to sin and Satan, and reduce them to their duty, and so bring them into a state of liberty and happiness!

* Mr. Howe, in his discourse on Reconciliation between God and Man.

This is the benevolent design on which the Son of God came down from his native heaven, and for which he endured the shame and the agonies of the cross. This is the design on which he sent out his apostles into the world, armed, not with instruments of mischief and destruction, but with the most beneficent powers, powers of doing good, the powers of preaching the most important doctrines, of proving them by argument, and the evidence of miracles and prophecies, and of exercising proper discipline upon offenders, to bring them to repentance. To carry on this design, the ministry of the gospel is perpetuated in the world from age to age ; and for this purpose, my dear people, I would exercise my ministry among you, I would make an attack upon your hearts to break them open for the admission of the King of heaven I have continued the siege for near ten years, the space spent in reducing the stubborn Trojans ; and now, in the name of God, I once more would renew the attack, and summon you to capitulate and surrender.

For this purpose the ministers of the gospel have their arms ; they begin the attack with the artillery of the divine law, which thunders the terrors of the Lord against you. They surround you with troops of arguments, which one would think would soon overpower a reasonable creature, and constrain him immediately to submit. They reason the matter with you, and lay before you the wickedness, the baseness, the unnatural ingratitude, and the dangerous consequences of your rebellion. They inform you what a good king and what an excellent government you have rejected ; what holy, just, and good laws you have insolently broken ; what rich mercies you have ungratefully abused ; what long-continued patience you have provoked ; and what friendly warnings you have despised. They expose to your view the terrible consequences of your rebellion, if you persist in it : they honestly warn you that *the wages of sin is death* ; death in all its terrible forms ; death temporal, spiritual, and eternal ; that if you continue the unequal war against Heaven, it will issue in your eternal remediless destruction. They open to you the corruption of your natures ; the aversion of your hearts to all that is spiritually good and excellent ; your innate propensions to sin, and voluntary indulgence of your lusts and guilty pleasures. They put you upon a review of your lives, to recollect your wilful omissions of duty to God and man, and your commissions of known sin, in spite of the restraints of authority, the allurements of mer-

cy, and the admonitions of your own consciences. When they have thus discharged the dreadful artillery of the law, the thunders and lightnings of Sinai against you, the way is prepared for proposing the terms of surrender and articles of reconciliation. They make an attack upon the citadel of your heart, with the gentler arms from the magazine of the gospel of peace. They represent your injured Sovereign as reconcileable, reconcileable through Jesus Christ. They give you the strongest assurances from his own word, that he is willing to make up the difference and conclude a lasting peace with you; that upon your laying down your arms (that is, forsaking your sins and submitting upon his terms) he will freely pardon all your past rebellion, and receive you again into his favour. They also inform you of the strange method in which this peace may be brought about, consistently with the honour of his character as the Ruler of the world, and with the sacred rights of his government, and that is, through the mediation of his Son, the great Peace-maker, who, in your stead, has obeyed that law which you have broken, and endured that penalty which you have incurred. They likewise inform you in what manner you are to accede to this treaty, or consent to this plan of accommodation, namely, by believing in his Son, by accepting peace with God, and every blessing as his free gift through Jesus Christ, by a deep ingenuous repentance for your past rebellion, and by devoting yourselves to his service for the future. These overtures of reconciliation they enforce from various topics, which, one would think, you would not be able to resist. They represent to you the riches of divine grace and mercy, and the all-conquering love of Jesus. That contemptible weapon, the cross, is a weapon of tried and well-known energy; many an hard heart has it broken; many an obstinate rebel has it subdued. They *pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God;* and if you should be hardy enough to refuse such a request, they urge it with arguments drawn from its reasonableness in justice and gratitude, from its being of the last importance to your happiness, as being the only way in which apostate creatures can re-obtain the favour of their injured Sovereign—and from the terrible consequences of a refusal; for unless you submit upon these terms, you may expect nothing but wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour you as adversaries.

You cannot but know, my brethren, that the ministry of the gospel has, with such arms as these, laid close seige to your

hearts, year after year. And who would have thought that one heart among you would have been proof against this divine artillery, and stood it out so long? Some of you, I doubt not, have surrendered, and are now the willing subjects of your heavenly King. But, alas! do not some of you still obstinately refuse to submit, and persist in your rebellion? And are you not fortifying yourselves more and more against the attempts made to reduce you to obedience? This naturally leads me,

III. To give you a kind of history of the various ways in which sinners oppose this benevolent design of the ministry of the gospel to subdue them to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! they also have their artillery, with which they labour to repel all the attacks made upon them by the gospel. They, as it were, throw up various lines of intrenchments around them, to defend them against conviction. Particularly,

Sinners hide themselves in the darkness of ignorance; ignorance of God, of Jesus Christ, of the law and gospel, and consequently of themselves. They endeavour to keep up their courage by refusing to know their danger. They muffle themselves up in ignorance, so that they do not see their almighty enemy, nor the instruments of death he has prepared for them; and hence they are so stupid as to conclude that neither does he see them, nor can find them out. They also fortify themselves, as it were, in the enclosure of a hard heart; a heart of rock and adamant, which is proof against the artillery of the gospel. This, like an impregnable cave cut in a rock, stands out against all the terrors of the Lord set in array against it. The sinner, shut up in this strong hold, can laugh at the shaking of Jehovah's spear! Let the law thunder out tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish against him; let the gospel attack him with the cross of Christ, with all the love of a dying Saviour, and all the mercy of a reconcileable God, he is still secure, and bids defiance to all these attacks. The rock is impregnable till the power of God gives force to these weapons, and then indeed it begins to tremble; then the sinner is struck into a consternation, and is dreadfully apprehensive he cannot hold out the seige. This natural fortification, (so I may call it, for his ignorance and hardness of heart are natural to him, though dreadfully improved by art) this natural fortification I say, begins to fail him; and hereupon he sets himself to work upon artificial fortifications, which may enable him to hold it out the longer in his opposition.

He throws up an intrenchment of objections and excuses, or (a little to alter the metaphor) he discharges whole vollies of objections and excuses against those that beseige him. Perhaps he dares to plead that he is already a dutiful subject of the King of heaven, and therefore that the ministry of the gospel has missed its aim in directing its artillery against him as an enemy. And if to this plea it be answered, that his temper and conduct towards his Sovereign plainly shew that he is really disaffected to him in his heart, whatever outward professions of duty he may make; he replies, that if in some instances he allows himself in the breach of the divine laws, yet he has no bad design in so doing; that he has a good heart notwithstanding; and that he hopes the King of heaven will not be so strict as to take notice of these things. He objects, that he is as loyal as other people about him, and why may not that suffice; and that, if he should be very punctual and zealous in his duty, he would soon be out of fashion, and draw the contempt and ridicule of the world upon him. He objects, that he has not been so bold and daring a rebel as many others, and therefore he cannot think that so mild and gracious a King will severely punish him. He objects, that he is now too busy about other things, to listen to proposals of reconciliation; and therefore begs that the matter may be put off, at least, till he has finished some important affairs he has now in hand. And he promises, that the next year, or in old age, or upon a death bed, he will submit, and conclude a peace. He pleads that he enjoys a great deal of pleasure under his present master, sin, which he must give up as unlawful, if he should change masters; and that the service of God is a drudgery to him, and that he has no relish for it, and that the laws of the King of heaven are so strict, that he cannot live under them.—These, and a thousand other pleas, the rebel urges to excuse his non-compliance with the proposals of reconciliation; and in these he trusts as a sufficient defence.

Moreover, the lusts of the flesh, his pride, presumption, and love of ease, the cares of the world, the company of the wicked, who persuade him by all means not to surrender, and furnish him with arms and all the assistance in their power to continue the war, these are all so many strong holds in which the sinner fortifies himself against the Lord Jesus.

But if the weapons of the gospel prove mighty through God to demolish these strong holds, and the rebel finds they can defend

him no longer, then he abandons these out-works, and intrenches himself secretly in his own righteousness. He, as it were, surrounds himself with a line of good works, repentance, and reformation. And now he thinks he is safe. Now he hopes he shall pass for a friend and subject of the King of heaven, as he is holding a place for him, and that the artillery of the law will continue to play upon him no longer. This is the sinner's last refuge ; and it is the greatest difficulty of all to drive him out of this. He will not abandon this, till he is driven to great extremity indeed. And here many continue till they are dragged out of it to the tribunal of their supreme Judge.

It must also be observed, that the sinner tries all the arts of dissimulation to secure his strong hold. When he finds he cannot defend himself as an open enemy by his declared hostilities, he feigns a submission ; he pretends to capitulate and surrender ; but then, he does not cordially consent to all the terms. He makes a reserve of some favourite lusts, and will not deliver them all up to the sword of the conqueror : he has secret exceptions to the conditions of surrender, and will not comply with them all. There are some instances of duty, from which he will excuse himself. In short, his heart is not well-affected to the Conqueror. His submission is forced and involuntary, and therefore is resented as the basest treachery by him that searches the heart, and must reign in the hearts of all his subjects.

Are not some of you, my brethren, now intrenched and fortified against the gospel in these strong holds ? And such of you as are now the willing subjects of Jesus Christ, may you not recollect, that thus did you once strengthen yourselves in your opposition to him ! But he has sweetly overcome your enmity, and constrained you to submit. And this leads me,

IV. To describe the issue of this war, where it is effectually carried on, and particularly the terms of surrender.

The success of this war depends entirely upon the concurrence of the almighty power of God. If the weapons of our warfare prove mighty, it is through God. Let the ministers of the gospel attack the sinner with all the arms with which the magazines of the law and gospel, of scripture and reason furnish them, they will never subdue one soul to the obedience of Christ : the sinner will still stand it out, and bid them defiance. What is the reason, that there are so many secure presumptuous rebels among us, though the gospel-ministry has so often and so long

played off its artillery against them ? The reason is, the weapons of our warfare are not made mighty through God. God does not give edge and force to these arms by the all conquering power of his Spirit. But when he begins to work, then the hardest sinner begins to tremble, the rocky heart breaks to pieces, and his strong holds are demolished. All his objections are silenced ; he is convinced that he is indeed a rebel against his rightful Sovereign ; that his rebellion is most unnatural, ungrateful, unreasonable, and the height of wickedness ; and that it is a most astonishing instance of condescending grace, that his provoked Sovereign should stoop to treat with him and deign to propose him articles of reconciliation. He sees that he might justly cut him off, without one offer of mercy. He is struck with horror to think that ever he, a poor dependent worm, should engage in a war against the Lord of armies, who has universal nature at his command, and especially that he has dared to stand out so long against him. He is sensible of the danger of delays, sensible that he has been ungrateful and rebellious too long already, and that, if he delay his submission, his almighty enemy may take his strong holds by storm, and put him to the sword. He is now sensible that the slavery of sin is intolerable ; that his lusts are tyrannical masters, and will give him no other wages but death ; and therefore he pants and struggles for liberty. The artillery of the divine law demolishes the promising intrenchment which he had formed of his own good works, and leaves him naked and defenceless to its vindictive fire. Conscience also calls to the sinner to surrender, to surrender in time, while terms of peace may be obtained, and warns him of the dreadful consequences of continuing the war. The trumpet of the gospel is still publishing peace, and summoning him to submit. The gospel assures him of pardon and acceptance, if he will but surrender. Now also (if I may so boldly accommodate the military style to this subject) now his provisions and ammunition begin to fail ; he finds he can subsist no longer ; and, like the prodigal, is *just perishing with hunger*. He finds he can defend himself no longer, but must submit or die. If he continues in arms, he is sure to die ; but if he submits, he has some hopes of pardon ; for O ! he has *heard that the King of Israel is a merciful King*. He must however make the trial. All this time the Spirit of God is at work within, sweetly inclining the stubborn heart to yield,

casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. He gives the rebel favourable thoughts of the government of the Conqueror, and the infinite advantages of living under it. In short, he enforces upon the heart all the applications made from without by the ministry of the gospel.

And now the sinner begins to think in earnest of surrendering: now he eagerly listens to the terms of peace; and at length he lays down his arms, submits to the Conqueror, falls at his feet, casts himself upon his mercy, and welcomes him into the citadel of his heart. This is the most happy and important hour the sinner ever saw: the transactions of this hour extend their blessed consequences through all his future life, and to the remotest periods of eternity. It may be necessary for me to inform you more particularly of the manner of this surrender.

(1.) The sinner surrenders himself as an obnoxious rebel, lying entirely at the mercy of the Conqueror. He has no plea to excuse his rebellion, no merit to ingratiate himself, or procure a pardon. He pleads guilty, and surrenders himself to the will of the Conqueror, conscious that he may do with him as he pleases. His high imaginations of himself are all demolished, his confidence in his own righteousness is entirely mortified, and he has nothing to plead but mercy, free unmerited mercy. On this he casts himself as his only ground of hope.

(2.) He surrenders himself entirely upon the terms prescribed by the Conqueror. He is conscious that he has no right to dictate, or to stand upon terms. His province is to submit. The way of reconciliation revealed in the gospel, appears to him infinitely reasonable, and to stand in need of no amendment.—Particularly, he is willing to lay down his arms; that is, to forsake his sins, and to walk for the future in the ways of holiness; or to make the pleasure of his Sovereign the rule of his conduct. Above all it must be noticed, that he is willing to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The mediation of Jesus Christ, the glorious peculiarity of the christian religion, is the only medium through which he would approach to God, and expect reconciliation with him. It is only in the righteousness of Christ he trusts to make atonement for his guilt, and procure the divine favour. In short, he is willing the Conqueror should make his own terms, and he submits, if he may but have his life for a prey. He puts a blank into his hands, desirous he should fill it up with

what articles he pleases, and he will cheerfully subscribe to them: His language is like that of Paul, when struck down prostrate at the feet of the persecuted Jesus, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Lord, do thou command, and I will obey. Now the rebel is all submission, all obedience.

(3.) He submits voluntarily and cheerfully. The power of divine grace has rooted out the enmity of his carnal mind, and implanted the principle of love in his heart. He breaks off from sin and Satan, as from the most cruel usurpers and destroyers; and he submits to Christ, not merely as to an irresistible Conqueror, but as to a Deliverer. He enters upon a religious life, not as a state of slavery and unwilling captivity, but as a state of the most glorious liberty. He submits to the terms of reconciliation, not as the arbitrary impositions of an imperious usurper, but as the gentle and reasonable prescriptions of a wise and good ruler. He esteems all his laws holy, and just, and good; and with all his heart he acquiesces and rejoices in the blessed gospel of peace. In short, the rebel's heart is now entirely changed and rendered well-affected to the divine government: and consequently, he cordially and freely submits to it. Once indeed he hated it, and then he did at best but feign submission to it; but now, his enmity being subdued, he surrenders himself with all his heart. It is one of the freest acts of his whole life.

(4.) He makes an universal surrender of himself and all that he is and has to Jesus Christ. He makes no reserve of one favourite lust; but gives them all up to be slain. He makes no secret exceptions to any of the articles of reconciliation, but heartily consents to them all. He devotes his whole soul and all its faculties to God, in and through Jesus Christ; his understanding to know him; his heart to love him; and his will to be governed by him. This is implied in my text; *Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.* Every thought, every passion, every motion of the soul must submit to Christ, and every insurrection of sin in his heart alarms him, as an intestine enemy. He also yields his body to God, and his members as *instruments of righteousness unto holiness.* He also devotes all his accomplishments, his genius, learning, influence, and popularity, his riches, and in short all his possessions of every kind; willing to employ them all in the service of his new Master, or to resign them all, if their preservation should be inconsistent with his duty

to him. O! how different a temper is this from that which is natural to the sinner!

Thus the treaty of peace is happily concluded; and he that was once a rebel against Heaven, and an enemy to the cross of Christ, is now become a friend and a loyal subject. The past difference is entirely forgotten and buried, and he is received into favour, as though he had never offended. Once God was angry with him every day, but now he accepts him in the Beloved. Now the prince of hell has lost a captive; and Jesus has the satisfaction of seeing one more of his spiritual seed born unto his family. Now there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, upon this addition to the number of loyal subjects. O! the happy, the glorious peace! O! the blessed change in the circumstance of the poor condemned criminal!

What now remains?

V. We take a view of the true convert's state and conduct in consequence of this reconciliation.

This you may be sure is very different from what it was before. He is now delivered from his sordid slavery to sin, as well as from guilt, and the sentence of condemnation. He is justified and accepted before God, through Jesus Christ, and entitled to an heavenly crown and kingdom. Sin, indeed, is not entirely subdued; it forms frequent and violent insurrections, and struggles hard to recover its former power over him. The old man with his affections and lusts was immediately crucified, upon the sinner's surrender to Christ; but crucifixion is a lingering death, and hence sin is never entirely dead while he continues in this imperfect state: it is every day plotting against him, and labouring to ensnare him. And hence his life is a constant warfare, an incessant conflict. He lives the life of a sentinel, perpetually upon the watch; or of a soldier, night and day under arms. If he is off his guard but for an hour, he is liable to be surprised, and sometimes, alas! he is overcome. But he rises again, and renews the combat, and will rather die than submit: he would resist even unto blood, striving against sin. In short, whatever inadvertences he may fall into, he is habitually on God's side: he espouses the cause of God in this rebellious world, whatever it costs him. He is an enemy to the kingdom of darkness, and all its interests; and it is the great business of his life to oppose it in himself and others. The longer he lives under the government of King Jesus, the more he is attached to him, and in love

with his administration ; and it is his habitual endeavour to lead a life of universal obedience.

And now, my brethren, there is an inquiry I would set you upon, and that is, whether you have ever been captivated into a willing obedience to Jesus Christ ? I am afraid this matter is not so plainly and unquestionably in your favour, as to render all inquiry into it needless. I am afraid it is dismally dark and doubtful with regard to some of you, whether you are the servants of Christ or the slaves of sin and Satan. Nay, I am afraid, there are plain evidences against some of you. However, put the matter to trial, that you may see how it will turn out ; for I assure you it is a matter of too much importance to be slightly passed over.

Now it is evident, in the first place, that you are still the enemies of Jesus Christ, unless you have been deeply convinced of your enmity. It is impossible you should be reconciled to him, till you have seen your need of reconciliation ; and it is impossible you should see your need of reconciliation till you are convinced that you are at variance with him. Such of you therefore are undoubtedly his enemies, who imagine you have always been his friends.

In the next place, turn the substance of what has been said into so many queries to yourselves, and by these means, you may discover the truth of your case. Has ever the dreadful artillery of the law discharged its terrors upon you ? Have you ever been driven out of all your carnal confidences, and particularly your own righteousness ? Have you ever surrendered yourselves to the Conqueror ? Has he overcome you by the sweet constraints of his love ? And upon what terms did you surrender ? Did you surrender as a rebel, lying at mercy ? Did you submit to his terms without pretending to dictate any of your own ? Did you submit voluntarily and cheerfully ? Did you surrender yourselves universally, without any reserve ? Do you since endeavour to behave as dutiful subjects ? And do you find his service to be perfect freedom ?

And now, in consequence of this trial, *Who is upon the Lord's side ? Who ?* What is your real character ? Are you to be ranked among the subjects of Christ, or among the enemies of his crown and dignity ?

Could I now collect the rebels together into one company, I would tell them some very alarming things from that God to whom they refuse to submit. Yes, sinner, as Ehud said to

Eglon, king of Moab, *I have a message from God to you.* Judges iii. 20.

In his name, and as his ambassador, I warn you of the dreadful consequences of your unnatural rebellion against him. You cannot make good your cause against him. *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered?* All nature is subject to him, and he can order the meanest part of it to be the executioner of his vengeance upon you. If you refuse to submit, you shall as surely perish as you have a being. Of this you have reason to be apprehensive at all times, but especially at this time, when your almighty enemy is attacking your country with the terrors of war, and your neighbourhood with an epidemical raging distemper. Sicknesses are his soldiers, and fight in his cause against a rebellious world. *He says to one, Go, and it goeth; and to another, Come, and it cometh.* And are you not afraid some of these deadly shafts may strike you now, when they are flying so thick around you? God has for many a year used gentler weapons with you, but now he seems about to take the citadel by storm. Now, therefore, now without delay, lay down your arms and surrender yourselves to him.

I have also joyful news to communicate, even to you rebels, if you are disposed to hear it; and that is, that your injured Sovereign is willing to be reconciled to you after all your hostilities, if you will now submit to the terms of reconciliation.

Therefore, *I pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Christ is not here in person; but lo I am here to manage the treaty in his name, though I also am formed out of the clay.

Sermon 37.

THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS ILLUSTRATED IN THE METHOD OF SALVATION, THROUGH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

JOHN XII. 27, 28. *Now my soul is troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*

SHOULD a favourite child now come running to you, with all the marks of agony in his countenance, and with these words in his mouth, "I am troubled; my very soul is troubled, and

I know not what to say ;" it would raise all the tender sensations of fatherly compassion and anxiety in your breasts, and you would solicitously inquire, " what ails my dear child, what is the cause of your distress ?" But here your ears are struck with a more strange and affecting sound ; you hear the source of all consolation complaining of sorrow : " I am troubled ; my very soul is troubled, and in a commotion like the stormy ocean." You see the wisdom of God, the guide of the blind, pausing—hesitating—at a stand—at a loss what to say. And will you not so far interest yourselves in his sorrows, as solicitously to inquire, " What ails my dear Lord ?" Judas has not yet betrayed him ; the rabble have not yet apprehended him, and dragged him away, like a flagitious malefactor : as yet his face is not dishonoured with spitting nor bruised with blows ; as yet I see no crown of thorns upon his sacred head ; no nails in his hands and feet ; no spear in his side ; no streams of blood and water running down his body. He is at liberty, and surrounded with his usual friends : nay, at this time even the despised Jesus begins to grow popular : the humble Jesus, the man of sorrows, has just now entered Jerusalem in triumph, like a conqueror, surrounded with the applauses and hosannas of the multitude. Now also the first-fruits of the Gentiles are brought to him : a number of Greek proselytes beg an interview with him, and desire his instructions : a thing so agreeable to him, that as soon as he hears of it, he cries out, *The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.* John xii. 23. And why does my Lord alter his voice so soon ? Why, my blessed Jesus, why this sudden fall from joy to trouble, from triumph to sorrow and perplexity ? The reason was, that though his sufferings were not now upon him, yet he saw them approaching : he saw the fatal hour just at hand ; and this immediate prospect raises all the passions of his human nature, and throws him into a sea of troubles. He did not fall into his sufferings through inadvertency, or the want of foresight ; and his fortitude and resolution were not owing to any hopes of escape, or an expectation of better usage. But we are expressly told, that *Jesus knew all things that should come upon him.* John xviii. 4. He saw the rugged road before him, all the way from his cradle to his cross. He rushed into dangers with his eyes open, and went on courageously to encounter the last enemy, Death, fully expecting to meet him in all his terrors. Now the foresight of sufferings is a peculiar aggravation ; it brings them upon the anxious expectant by anticipation :

they are reflected back upon him, before they are actually inflicted; and thus the pain of a few moments may be diffused through a length of years. And sometimes the expectation of an evil is more tormenting than the evil itself.* Our happiness is in a great measure owing to our being happily blind to the future,† and ignorant of the calamities before us. But Jesus had not this mitigation of his sufferings: the cross, the scourge, the nails, the crown of thorns, were ever before his mind: so that he could say with yet greater reason than his servant Paul, *I die daily, I am in deaths oft.* By this painful foresight, the crown of thorns was always upon his head; the nails were all his days fastened in his hands and feet; and his whole life was, as it were, one continued crucifixion. How peculiarly aggravated, how long continued, how uninterrupted do the severities of his sufferings appear, when viewed in this light! and how does this display his fortitude and the strength of his love! though he had this tragical prospect before him, yet he did not draw back or give up the arduous undertaking; but he resolutely held on his way; he was irresistibly carried to meet all these terrors, by his ardent zeal for his Father's glory, and his unconquerable love to the guilty creatures whose salvation he had undertaken. Sometimes indeed he shews he was a man; that he was capable of all the tender and painful sensations of human nature: and if he had not been such, his sufferings would have been no sufferings. At such times his innocent humanity seems struck aghast, pauses and hesitates, and would fain shrink away from the burden, would fain put by the bitter cup. But immediately the stronger principles of zeal for the divine glory, and love to man, gain the ascendant, calm all these tumults of feeble nature, and irresistibly impel him on to the dreadful encounter in its most shocking appearances. O! the generous bravery of the Captain of our salvation! O! the all-conquering power of his love! The critics are in raptures on the bravery of Homer's Achilles, who engaged in the expedition against Troy, though he knew he should never return. But how much more worthy to be celebrated is the heroic love of Jesus, who voluntarily exposed himself to infinitely greater sufferings, when he foresaw them all, and knew what would be the consequence!

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* Morsque minus poenae quam mora mortis habet. OVID.

† "O blindness to the future! kindly given." POPE

The language of raised passions is abrupt and hurrying; and in such language does our Lord here speak. *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?* "What petition shall I ask of my Father? such an hour of distress is a proper time to address him. But what shall I say to him? shall I yield to the reluctance of my frail, human nature, that would draw back from suffering? shall I urge the petition my feeble flesh would put into my mouth, and say, *Father, save me from this hour?** Father, dismiss me from this undertaking, and resign the glory which thou wouldst gain by the execution of it. Father, if it be possible, save sinners in some easier way; or let them perish, rather than that I should suffer so much for them. Shall this be my petition? No; I cannot bear the thought, that my Father should lose so much glory, and the objects of my love should perish. It was to suffer for these important purposes that I came unto this hour. For this I undertook to be the sinner's Friend and Mediator; for this I left my native paradise, and assumed this feeble flesh and blood; for this I have spent three-and-thirty painful years in this wretched world, that I might meet this dismal hour. And now, when it is come, shall I fly from it, or shall I drop an undertaking which I have so much at heart, and in which I am so far engaged? No; this petition I will not urge, though it be the natural cry of my tender humanity. What then shall I say? *Father, glorify thy name.* This is the petition on which I will insist, come on me what will. Let the rabble insult me, as the offscouring of all things; let false witnesses accuse me, and perfidious judges condemn me, as a notorious criminal; let the blood-thirsty murderers rack me on the cross, and shed every drop of blood in my veins, still I will insist upon this petition; and not all the tortures that earth and hell can inflict shall force me to retract it; *Father, glorify thy name*: display the glory of thy attributes by my sufferings, and I will patiently submit to them all. Display the perfections of thy nature, exhibit an honourable representation of thyself to all worlds by the salvation of sinners through my death, and I will yield myself to its power in its most shocking forms. Let this end be but answered, and I am content. This consideration calms the tumult of passions in

* This sense is more easy if we read, Πάτερ σῶσον με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης, as a question. The original will bear it; and so Grotius, Doddridge, &c. understand it.

my breast, overpowers the reluctance of my human nature, and makes it all patience and submission."

I intend, my brethren, to confine myself at present to this part of my text, this petition on which Jesus insists, and in which his mind acquiesces after perplexity and hesitation: *Father, glorify thy name.* And it evidently suggests to us this important truth, that the divine perfections are most illustriously displayed and glorified in the method of salvation through the sufferings of Christ.

This truth I shall endeavour to illustrate, after I have premised that it is most fit and proper that the glory of God should be the last end of all things, and particularly, that it should be his own principal end in all his works. He is in himself the most glorious of all beings, the supreme excellence, and the supreme good; and it is infinitely fit and reasonable that he should be known and acknowledged as such, and that it should be his great end in all his works to represent himself in this light. It is but justice to himself, and it is the kindest thing he can do for his creatures, since their chief happiness must consist in the enjoyment of the supreme good, and as they cannot enjoy him without knowing him. Selfishness in creatures is a vile and wicked disposition, because they are not the greatest or best of beings; but for God to love and seek himself above all, is the same thing as to love and seek what is absolutely best; for such he is. The aims of creatures should reach beyond themselves, because God, the supreme good, lies beyond them; they should all terminate upon him, and should not fall short of him, as they cannot fly beyond him, because he is the supreme excellence, and it is not to be found any where else. But for this reason he must aim at himself, if he aims at what is absolutely best; for he only is so. For creatures to aim principally at their own glory, to set themselves off, and make it their end to gain applause, is vanity and criminal ambition, because they are really unworthy of it, and were formed for the glory of another, even of the great Lord of all. But for God to make his own glory his highest end, for him to aim at the display of his attributes in all his works, is most decent and just, and infinitely distant from a vain ostentation, because there is nothing else so excellent, and so worthy of a display; his perfections deserve to be represented in the most illustrious light, and demand the highest veneration and love from the whole universe. In short, for God to aim at his own glory in

all his actions, is but for him to do justice to infinite merit, to display the most perfect beauty, to illustrate supreme excellence, to exhibit the supreme good in a just light, to procure honour to what is in itself most honourable, and to represent the true God in the most godlike manner : and what can be more fit or decent ? a lower end than this would be unworthy of him. This is of more real worth than the existence, or the happiness of ten thousand worlds. And this is the end which he has uniformly pursued in all the steps of creation, providence and redemption. This particularly was his end in the permission of sin, and in the form of his administration towards our guilty world, through a Mediator. As, on the one hand, we are sure that he is not at all accessary to sin, as its proper producing cause, so we may be equally sure, on the other hand, that it has not entered into the world without his permission ; that is, it could not have happened if he had hindered it. Now there were undoubtedly very good reasons for this permission ; and one appears evident, namely, that if sin had never entered, it would have been impossible in the nature of things, that some of the divine perfections, particularly his punishing justice and his forgiving grace, should be displayed in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures. Pardoning grace could never be displayed, if there were no sin to be pardoned ; nor vindictive justice, if there were no crimes to be punished : and consequently, if moral evil had never been permitted, these perfections must have been forever idle, concealed, and as much unknown, as if they did not belong to the divine nature. But now there is room for the various economy of providence towards guilty creatures, and particularly for the mediatorial scheme of salvation to our world. And I now proceed to shew, that in this scheme all the perfections of God have an illustrious display, and are represented to the greatest advantage.

Here I would consider this scheme, both absolutely in itself and relatively, as a part of the grand administration towards the rational world. In the latter view, I shall consider it but briefly, and therefore I shall begin with it.

Considering it relatively, as a part of the divine economy towards the rational world, it concurs with the other parts, to show the amiable and wise variety of the divine government, or in how many ways God can answer his ends, and display his perfections in his dispensations towards his creatures.

The scriptures give us an account of the divine conduct towards two sorts of reasonable creatures, angels and men. And from thence we may also learn the wise variety of the divine dispensations towards them. A part of the angels were preserved in their primitive state of holiness, and a part of them were suffered to fall into sin. But the whole human race was permitted to fall, and not one of them continued in their original state of integrity. A part of the angels are happy forever; and so is a number of mankind. But here lies the difference; the angels are continued in a state of happiness, from which they never fell; but the saved from among men are recovered from a state of sin and misery, into which they fell, to a state of happiness, which they had entirely lost. The angels are entitled to happiness upon the footing of a covenant of works, to which they have yielded perfect obedience; but men are saved entirely upon the plan of the covenant of grace, on account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to them and accepted for them, though it be not originally their own. The angels, having never offended, have no need of a Mediator, or of redemption through his blood. But it is through a Mediator only that guilty mortals have access to God; and they owe their salvation to his death. As to the fallen angels, there was no Saviour provided for them; but *to us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.* They were never placed in a second state of trial, or under a dispensation of grace, but given up to irrecoverable ruin immediately, upon their first apostasy; but our guilty race is placed under a dispensation of grace, and made probationers for a happy immortality, after their first fall. The devils are irrecoverably lost for want of a Saviour, but the sinners from among men perish by the neglecting a Saviour. All the fallen angels, without exception, are remediless miserable; but only a part of mankind share in their doom. The angels stood every one for himself, but Adam was constituted our representative; our concerns were lodged in his hands, and we fell in him. Now what a surprising variety is here! here are some holy and happy beings, that were never otherwise; and some that are recovered to holiness and happiness, who had been deeply involved in guilt and misery: here are some rewarded for their own personal works of obedience; and some are saved by the righteousness of another: here are some that have access to God without a Mediator, and some through a Mediator. Some that have always gone on in an easy, natural ten-

our of uniform obedience ; and some that have passed through various conflicts and temptations, and ascended to heaven from the field of battle ; here are some shining in all the glory of native innocence, highly improved, but not new-created ; and some repaired from their ruins, and formed anew. Here are some that perish without a dispensation of grace : some without the offer of a Saviour, and some for rejecting the offer. Here are some sinners abandoned forever for the first offence ; and some lost by abusing their time of trial and the means of their recovery. What various theatres are these, on which to display the glory of the divine perfections ! what amazing wisdom to form so many different models of government, and so conduct and manage them all, as to answer the best ends ! If there be any of the divine attributes that are most properly exercised upon sinless creatures that never fell, they meet with a proper object in the elect angels. If there be any perfections that cannot be displayed but upon the guilty, here are guilty men and angels, in the conduct towards whom they may shine in their full glory. If there be any of the divine attributes that may be represented in the most illustrious light, in the recovery of lost sinners through the obedience and sufferings of a Mediator, here are thousands saved in this way from among men, who will be the everlasting monuments of their amiable glories. If any of the divine perfections can receive more honour by punishing abandoned criminals immediately given up to remediless ruin, they receive that honour from the everlasting punishment of the fallen angels ; or if any of them be displayed to greater advantage, by the punishment of the ungrateful abusers of the means of grace, and a time of trial, the impenitent and unbelieving sons of men are a proper object for them. To all which I may add, that here we have the divine perfections displayed in justification by works and by grace, in inflicting punishment upon the proper offender, and upon Jesus Christ as a surety : and whatever glory may be peculiar to one or other of these ways, or may result from them all conjunctly as one whole, or system of government, all that glory redounds to the divine perfections.— Thus you see the method of salvation through Christ, considered as a part of the grand scheme of the divine government, tends to the illustration of the perfections of God : it is one link in the bright chain ; and should it be broken or removed, the whole system and contexture would be shattered or left incomplete. Thus St. Paul tells us, that by the dispensations of grace towards the

church, are made known, not only to men, but to principalities and powers (that is, to the angels) the manifold wisdom of God, his variegated and beautifully diversified wisdom. Ephes. iii. 10. And O ! that our eyes may be enlightened to behold and admire it ! However little this divine scheme be regarded in our blind and ungrateful world, the various ranks of angels cannot behold it with careless eyes : they stoop,* and look, and pry into it, with a divine curiosity and an insatiable eagerness, through all eternity. But let us now proceed to a more particular survey of this scheme, considered absolutely in itself ; and, in this view, we shall find the divine perfections are displayed more gloriously by it, than by any other ; particularly—as to the degree—the harmony—the universality—the grace and benevolence—and the wonderful and surprising manner of the display.

I. By this scheme the divine perfections are displayed in the highest degree possible. It appears that such and such attributes not only belong to God, but that they are in him in the highest perfection. Goodness had already displayed itself all the world over, in giving life and breath, and all things, to the sons of men, from age to age. But what are the blessings of the sun and rain, what are the productions of the earth, when compared to his only begotten Son, the man that was his fellow, whom he loved more than ten thousand worlds ! This is an *unspeakable gift :* this the richest gift which even the infinite goodness of God could bestow : almighty love could do no more ; this was its *ne plus ultra.* The creation and support of millions of worlds would not have displayed such a degree of love and goodness as this. God had displayed his holiness and justice, and his abhorrence of sin, by the variety of his judgments upon a guilty world ; and he will display these attributes to all eternity by the more dreadful punishments of hell. But the subjects of these punishments are creatures of an inferior order ; and they have provoked their gracious Sovereign, and most justly incurred his displeasure, by their own personal crimes. These he may therefore punish, and yet spare his Son, when he only becomes the surety of the guilty, and he is chargeable with no sin of his own, but only the imputed guilt of others. The dignity of his person, the greatness of the love of his Father to him, his personal innocence, and the benevolence of his design,

* 1 Pet. i. 12. " Which things (that is, the things now preached to us by the gospel, the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow) the angels desire παρακύψαι, to bend and pry into" with eager eyes.

plead for him, and seem to promise him an exemption, or at least the mitigation of his sufferings. This now is the greatest trial that can be made, whether divine justice be strictly inexorable, whether God can be prevailed upon by the strongest possible inducements to connive at sin, and dispense with his law. Had the doom of the whole created universe been suspended on it, it would not have been so great a trial. And what was the issue? St. Paul will tell you the amazing result, *God spared not his own Son*, his proper, peculiar Son,* but delivered him up to death. Rom. viii. 32. When the honour of his justice and holiness were at stake, even the Father would not relent; but with his own mouth, he issues out the dread commission, *Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, smite and spare not.* Zech. xiii. 7. *Now it even pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief.* Isa. liii. 10. And could there be a more astonishing display of justice and the sacred honours of the divine government? could a more striking proof be given of the infinite holiness of the divine nature, the malignity of sin, and his implacable hatred to it? No; all the punishments of hell can never give such an illustrious display of these perfections.† I might shew how sundry other at-

* τε ἰδιε υιε

† How astonishing was the rigid justice of Brutus the Elder, who, in spite of all the passions of a father, passed sentence of death upon his own sons, for conspiring against the liberty of their country. While the amiable youths stood trembling and weeping before him, and hoping their tears would be the most powerful defence with a father! while the senate whisper for the moderation of the punishment, and that they might escape with banishment; while his fellow-consul is silent; while the multitude tremble and expect the decision with horror, the inexorable Brutus rises in all the stern majesty of justice, and with a steady voice, not interrupted with one sigh, turning to the lictors, who were the executioners, says to them, "To you, lictors, I deliver them; execute the law upon them." In this sentence he persisted inexorable, notwithstanding the weeping intercessions of the multitude, and the cries of the young men calling upon their father by the most endearing names. The lictors seized them, stripped them naked, tied their hands behind them, beat them with rods, and then struck off their heads; the inexorable Brutus looking on the bloody spectacle with unaltered countenance. Thus the father was lost in the judge: the love of justice overcame all the fondness of the parent: private interest was swallowed up in a regard to the public good, and the honour and security of government. This, perhaps, is the most striking resemblance of the justice of the Deity that can be found in the history of mankind. But how far short does it fall! how trifling were the sufferings of these youths, compared to those of the Son of God! How insignificant the honour of the law and government for which they suffered, to that of the divine! How small the good of the public, in one case, to that in the other!——See Universal History, vol. xi. p. 360. Liv. l. ii. c. 5.

tributes, particularly wisdom and veracity, are illustrated to the highest degree possible by this scheme ; but my time denies me that pleasure.

II. The divine perfections are displayed in the most perfect harmony in this method of salvation : I mean such of them as seemed to jar, to cloud the glory of each other, or to be incapable of being illustrated at once, are now reconciled and mingle their beams, and, instead of obscuring, reflect a glory upon each other. The matter was so circumstanced, that it seemed really impossible to men and angels to display several divine perfections conjunctly. There seemed to be a necessity that one or other of them should be eclipsed ; for if grace should be displayed in the universal pardon of sin, without the infliction of punishment, what will become of justice ? How will the holiness of God be displayed ? how will the honour of the law and the sacred rights of government be secured ? But if these be illustrated by the punishment of sin, how will the goodness, grace, and mercy of God appear in diffusing happiness, in conferring blessings on the unworthy, and in relieving the miserable ! If sinners are saved without a satisfaction, how will it appear that God is righteous, and hates all moral evil ? or if a full satisfaction be made, how will it appear that their salvation is of grace ? Can sin be punished, and yet the sinner escape without punishment? What device shall be found out for this ? If sin pass unpunished, where is the honour of justice ? and if all sinners are punished, where is the glory of grace ? If the threatened penalty be not executed, is not the divine veracity rendered suspicious ? and if it be executed, what will become of the amiable attribute of mercy ? These, my brethren, are a few of the difficulties with which the case was embarrassed and perplexed ; and they would have nonplused all created understandings : nothing but the infinite wisdom of God could surmount them. You see that the illustration of one set of perfections seems to cast a cloud over another set. To whatever side the Deity inclines, there seems to be a necessity that he should be but half-glorious, like the sun under a partial eclipse. And is there any method in which he may be represented as he is, all glorious throughout ?

> " A God all o'er, consummate, absolute,
> Full-orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete. YOUNG.

Yes ; such a method is the plan of salvation through Christ. These apparently clashing attributes harmonize ; and are so far

from clouding each other, that they are each of them displayed to greater advantage than if only one had been singly exercised. They reflect a mutual glory upon each other; and every one appears more illustrious in conjunction with the rest, than if it shone alone with its own peculiar glory. Here justice is honoured by the infliction of the punishment upon Christ, as the surety of sinners; and yet goodness, grace, and mercy shine in full glory in their salvation. They are saved upon the footing of strict justice, because their surety made a complete satisfaction for them; and yet they are saved through grace, because it was grace that provided and accepted this method of vicarious satisfaction. The honours of the divine government are secured by Christ's perfect obedience to the law; and the philanthropy and mercy of the divine administration are also exhibited in the salvation of those who in their own persons had broken the law. Thus, according to that prophetic oracle, *Mercy and truth are met together*, and agreed; *righteousness and peace have kissed each other* in perfect friendship. Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11. Here also the wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed, in concerting such an amazing plan as would reconcile these seemingly opposite attributes, and advance the honour of all by the exercise of each; and even of that which appeared most inconsistent with the rest. This scheme bears the peculiar seal and stamp of the most finished wisdom. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. O! the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God that appear in it! It was only his infinite wisdom that could invent such a scheme: it surpassed all created understanding. Hence it is often called *the wisdom of God in a mystery*: *the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations*: and it is said to reveal things *which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

To this head I may subjoin, that in Christ, as Mediator, are reconciled the most opposite and seemingly contradictory characters. Things may be truly and consistently predicted of him which cannot agree to any one subject besides himself. A God-man, divinity and humanity united in one person; the Ancient of Days, yet not but 1760 years old; the everlasting Father, and yet the virgin Son, the child of Mary; the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and yet the Servant of servants. The highest dignity and glory, and the lowest condescension and humility meet in

him. Here is justice punishing every the least sin, and yet grace to pardon the very greatest of sinners. Here are infinite majesty, and the most transcendent meekness: the deepest reverence toward God, and a full equality with him: infinite worthiness of good, and the most perfect patience under the suffering of evil; a submissive, obedient spirit, and supreme and universal dominion; absolute sovereignty and humble resignation. Jesus conquers by falling, saves others by dying himself, and the blood of his heart becomes the grand cure for the dying world. In him we see the highest love to God, and in the mean time the greatest love to the enemies of God; the greatest regard to the divine holiness, and the greatest benevolence to unholy sinners. It would be endless to enumerate all the opposite excellencies and characters that meet and harmonize in Jesus Christ; but these may suffice as a specimen. And what a surprising complication of things is here! Things that never did, or could meet in any other, harmoniously centre in him. How justly is his name called Wonderful! for as his name is, so is he: and as such, he will appear to all that know him to all eternity. How bright and astonishing is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! "That face, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace; that bloated, mangled visage, red with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death, that would be the last object in which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life, a visage clouded with the horror of death; in that face we may see more of the divine glory than in the face of heaven and earth."* He is the wisdom of God, and the power of God; that is, in him is the brightest display of his wisdom and power, as well as of his other attributes. But I must proceed.

III. The perfections of God are more universally displayed in the method of salvation through Christ than in any other way.

The wisdom, power, and goodness of God are displayed in the formation of the world; and there are many traces of these perfections, as well as of his justice, discoverable in the government of it. But there is a more full and striking view of these exhibited in the government of the world upon the plan of redemption, with the additional illustration of some other attributes, which would have been unknown or discovered only by some feeble glimmerings, if the world had never been governed upon this plan.

* Mac Laurin's Sermon on glorying in the cross.

Here, as I observed, the goodness of God in all its forms is illustriously displayed: grace in bestowing free favours upon the guilty and undeserving; mercy and compassion in relieving the miserable; patience and long-suffering in bearing so long with provoking obstinate rebels; whereas if there had been no guilt, misery and rebellion permitted to enter into the world; or if no guilt had been pardoned, no misery relieved, no rebellion endured, there would have been no room for the display of grace, mercy, and patience. Here justice shines, and shines with peculiar advantage: now it appears to be an inseparable attribute of the Deity, and which he can in no case dispense with. Here veracity appears unstained, in executing the penalty of the law, even upon the darling Son of God. The majesty of the divine government and its sacred rights, these too are represented as inviolable and venerable, and demanding the regard of the whole creation; whereas, if there had been no guilt, there could have been no object upon which the awful honours of divine justice might be displayed; and if all guilt had been pardoned without satisfaction, this majestic attribute, so venerable and so amiable in the character of a ruler, would have been forever concealed; or rather, great umbrage would have been given, that such a perfection did not belong to the supreme Governor of the world. And a judge without justice, a lawgiver who does not enforce his laws by proper sanctions, could be agreeable to none but wilful criminals. A petty kingdom of the earth would soon become a scene of lawless violence and confusion under such a ruler; and how dreadful would be the case, if the whole universe were under such a head! Here also is a most illustrious display of divine power. Though Christ was crucified in weakness, yet omnipotence shone even upon the cross. This may seem a paradox. "The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want of power; hence they upbraided him, that he that wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang upon the cross; but this was the greatest miracle of all. They asked why he, who saved others, saved not himself: they named the reason, without taking notice of it: that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others. The motive of his enduring the cross was powerful divine love, stronger than death: the fruits of it powerful divine grace, the power of God unto salvation, Rom. i. 16. making new creatures, raising souls from the dead: these are acts of omnipotence. We justly admire the

power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies ; but the motion of souls towards God as their centre is far more glorious.—The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. So they found it who first brought it upon themselves. It sunk legions of angels, who excel in strength, from the heaven of heavens to the bottomless pit. And the same weight hung over the head of man. Before man could bear it, before any person could bear his own proportion of it, it behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels, and distributed among all mankind, allowing every sinner his share. Man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part : the wrath to come would have been wrath to come to all eternity. But Christ had strength to bear it all, to bear it all at once, to bear it all alone ; and what a glorious manifestation of his might was this ! of the noblest kind of might, that he was mighty to save !"*—I might be more particular, but time will not allow.

IV. The scheme of salvation through the sufferings of Christ gives the most gracious, benevolent, and amiable display of the divine perfections. This is evident at first sight, from this consideration, that by this scheme sinners, such sinners as we, may be saved. O the joyful sound ! salvation for the lost, pardon for the condemned, sanctification for the unholy, life for the dead ! what can be more agreeable to us ! Angels contemplate this plan with eternal pleasure, though they do not need nor receive such blessings from it ; and how much more should we who are so nearly interested ! Goodness, grace, and mercy, are always the favourite attributes to guilty creatures such as we are, and where do they shine so bright in heaven or earth, as in the cross of our dying Jesus ? But you will say, " suppose that the sins of men had been pardoned, and they saved, without the sufferings of Christ in their stead ? suppose that the stern attribute of justice had never been displayed in the infliction of punishment either upon sinners, or upon their surety, where would have been the injury ? would not the Deity have appeared in a still more amiable light, as all benevolence and mercy ?" So criminals may surmise, whose interest it is that there should be no such attribute as punitive justice. But I appeal to angels, who are not parties, as criminals are, but competent judges ; I appeal to every lover of virtue and piety ; nay, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether a ruler without justice would be an

* Mac Laurin.

amiable character in their view ? Would they choose to live under a government where vice, violence, and confusion were not restrained by the execution of the law, but shared in the rewards, or at least, in the indemnity of perfect obedience ? would they choose a king, who, through a false notion of lenity and mercy, would suffer criminals to pass with impunity ? Do not the innocent part of the subjects approve of the conduct of their rulers in condemning and executing criminals, as well as in protecting themselves ? and what a murmuring spreads through a government, when such are tolerated or approved ? The complaint we hear of the excessive strictness of divine justice, the cruelty of eternal torments, &c. is the voice of guilt, and we should regard it no more than the clamours of a band of robbers against the just laws of their country. Justice, my brethren, is not that grim, horrible, and forbidding attribute, which the guilty are apt to imagine ; it is not only a majestic, but an amiable, agreeable, lovely perfection ; it is a part of the moral beauty of the divine nature ; it is essential to the character of a good ruler ; it is necessary to the public good ; it is absolutely necessary to the exercise of goodness itself. The judicious, well-conducted exercise of goodness is not a promiscuous, indiscriminating communication of happiness at random ; but the communication of happiness according to the real characters of the subjects ; it supposes a distinction of the obedient and disobedient. No government can subsist without this ; and this is the very nature of distributive justice. Hence it follows that the display of divine justice, as well as grace, in the sufferings of Christ, represents the divine nature in an amiable light to us, as infinitely worthy of our love as well as of our fear. But,

V. The way of salvation through the sufferings of Jesus Christ gives the most wonderful and surprising display of the perfections of God. That is a cause of wonder and surprise, which is strange and uncommon, new and unexpected ; and certainly we can never meet with things more strange, uncommon, and unexpected than in the way of salvation through Christ. I have mentioned some of them already with another view ; and now I shall enumerate a few wonders more. At the creation, a world was brought out of a state of non-existence into a being ; but in this way sinners are brought into a state of complete happiness and glory out of a state infinitely worse than that of non-existence. In the old creation, as there were no pre-existent materials, or tendency to

existence, so there was no resistance : but in the new creation, there is a strong resistance, an obstinate opposition of corrupt nature against the operation ; and yet, *behold all things are made new !* Who would ever have thought that the apostate angels should have been abandoned to remediless ruin, while a Saviour is provided for the inferior order of man ! Had Adam been plainly informed that He, by whom he and all things were made, should assume his frail and mortal nature, how would he have wondered ! And how must angels wonder, to see the Creator and the creature made one person ! to see their Lord and Master become man, a man that in his best estate was made a little lower than they ! How strange, that guilty mortals should be saved by the death of the Lord of life ! How astonishing that a church should be purchased by the blood of God ! how strange and surprising, that the reputed son of the carpenter, the despised Nazarene, should be made *head over all things ! that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to him*, that had been so rudely insulted, and treated as the most contemptible malefactor ! That the reputed criminal, condemned by Pilate, and crucified on mount Calvary, should be made the only Saviour, and the supreme Judge of mankind ! How strange, that the blood of the cross should restore peace to earth and heaven, and be the grand remedy of a dying world ! that the guilty should be redeemed by the death of the innocent ! that death should be conquered by the death of the Author of life ! that the greatest sin that ever was committed on our guilty globe, namely, the murder of the Son of God, should be the occasion of the pardon of sin, even for his murderers ! Are not these, my brethren, strange unprecedented things ! can you find any thing like them in heaven or earth ? these are objects of grateful astonishment to all the celestial armies through all the periods of their happy immortality.

I shall now conclude with a few reflections and exhortations.

1. You hence see what should principally recommend the gospel scheme to us ; namely, that it promotes the glory of God, and gives such an advantageous, amiable, and majestic view of his perfections. This is the grand design of God, and the only design worthy of him in all his works, and particularly in making this constitution. It was this consideration induced the blessed Jesus to go through his painful work, and therefore on this account principally we should delight in this method. And this is the disposition of all those that are conformed to God, and have

the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Our own salvation should indeed be dear to us, but not merely because it is ours, but because it tends to bring glory to God, the great end of all things. Therefore,

2. They who have never been sensible of the glory of God manifested in this method of salvation, and charmed with the divine perfections displayed therein, have not complied with it, and cannot be saved by it. None can be saved by it, that do not heartily approve of it; and none can rationally approve of it, till they see its glory. It is the characteristic of all true believers, that, *God hath shined into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. and iii. 18. It is natural to all to desire to be saved: but they are not solicitous about the glory of God; let them be but safe, and the selfish creatures care little for any thing else. But heaven itself is recommended to a pious soul by the thought that it may be brought thither in a way that tends to advance his glory. Alas! if this be the case, how many of you are quite off from the only plan of salvation! you see no peculiar glories in it, and it does not attract your hearts as the grand scheme for illustrating the divine perfections; and consequently, you have no interest in it.

3. Hence see the aggravated guilt of not accepting this method of salvation; it is a hostile attempt upon the divine glory; it is the worst of sacrilege; and as such Jehovah resents it.

4. You may hence see how secure you are of salvation who are upon the gospel plan. Your salvation in this way is for the glory of the divine perfections. God is so far from having any objections against it, that on the other hand, his honour is advanced by it; and therefore he will take the same care of your salvation as he will of his own glory, which is concerned therein.

5. These things may endear the institution of the Lord's supper to you as exhibiting these glories, by sacred emblems, to your senses: therefore you should esteem it, and reverently attend upon it.

It is true, this ordinance represents the Lord Jesus in his lowest state of abasement. But even in his lowest state, there appears a peculiar glory. Here I cannot deny you the pleasure of a quotation from that excellent man, Mr. Mac Laurin, once my friend and correspondent, now the companion of angels, an inhabitant of a better world. "Even the meanness of Christ did

not wholly becloud his glory : many beams shone through the disguise. His birth was mean on earth below : but it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. He had a poor lodging ; but a star lighted visitants to it from distant countries. Never prince had such visitants, so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other kings have : but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body ; that was more true greatness than if he had been attended with crowds of princes. He made the dumb that attended him to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy ; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. He had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants : but, as the centurion that had both, acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him : even the winds and storms, which no earthly power could control, obey him ; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry ; but when he walked on the sea, the waters supported him. All parts of the creation, except sinful man, honoured him as their Creator. He had no treasure ; but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish. He had no barns nor corn-fields ; but when he inclined to make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. Nor was his glory wholly clouded at his death : He had not indeed that phantastic equipage of sorrow that other great persons have on such occasions, but the frame of nature solemnized the death of its Author : heaven and earth were mourners, the sun was clad in black, and, if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth trembled under the awful load. There were few to pay the Jewish compliment of rending their garments ; but the rocks were not so insensible ; they rent their bowels. He had not a grave of his own, but other men's graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories ; but he came there, not as a subject, but as an invader, a conqueror ; it was then the king of terrors lost his sting, and on the third day the Prince of Life triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave."—These are the things, my brethren, this ordinance was designed to commemorate : and certainly these are full of glory.

6. These things may furnish you with proper materials for meditation this day. Fix your thoughts upon the glories of God

displayed in a crucified Jesus, take a survey of the scheme of salvation through his blood, as bringing not only salvation to you, but honour to him ; and wonder, love, and adore.

Finally, Let us all fall in with this glorious method of salvation ; and join with God and Christ, and the whole creation, in glorifying God in this way ; and in this way, and none else, we shall find salvation for ourselves.

Sermon 38.

RELIGION THE HIGHEST WISDOM, AND SIN THE GREATEST MADNESS AND FOLLY.

PSALM III. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.**

WISDOM is a character so honourable and ornamental to a reasonable being, that those who best knew the dignity of their own nature, have had no higher ambition than to be esteemed and called lovers of it. Hence the original of the name Philosopher,† which signifies no more than a lover of wisdom. On the other hand, there is hardly any character deemed more reproachful, or that is more resented, than that of a fool. Men are often as jealous of the reputation of their understandings as of their morals, and think it as great a reproach to be without sense as without goodness.

There is a prodigious diversity in the intellectual capacities of mankind, and their souls differ as much as their bodies ; but whether it be owing to the intrinsic difference of their souls, or to the different formation of their bodies, is not my present purpose to determine. Some, that share in human nature, give very little discoveries of reason above the most sagacious sorts of brutes. The generality are endowed with common sense, which, though it has nothing brilliant and pompous in it, and does not qualify them for high improvements in science, or making a figure in the learned world, yet it is sufficient for all the purposes of life, and

* Job xxviii. 28. Prov. i. 7. and ix. 10.

† Φιλοσοφος, quasi φιλος σοφιας a lover of wisdom. This name Phythagoras accepted, when he thought that of Σοφος, a wise man, was too ostentatious and arrogant for him.

the necessities of a human creature. There are a few also who seem raised beyond their species, and perhaps approach near to the lower ranks of angels by a superior genius. These have been the first inventors and improvers of useful arts and sciences ; which others of inferior understanding, are able to put in practice for their own purposes, though they had not sagacity at first to discover them.

This little world of ours is an improved spot in the creation. How vastly different an appearance does it now make from its original state of pure nature, when it emerged out of chaos, uncultivated by art ! What numerous arts and trades have been found out to furnish life with necessaries and comforts ! How deeply have some penetrated into the world of knowledge ! They have traced the secret workings of nature ; they have even brought intelligence from the worlds above us, and discovered the courses and revolutions of the planets.

When you see these discoveries, you would conclude mankind to be a wise race of creatures ; and indeed in such things as these they discover no inconsiderable abilities. Almost every man in his province can manage his affairs with some judgment. Some can manage a farm ; others are dexterous in mechanics ; others have a turn for mercantile affairs ; others can unfold the mysteries of nature, and carry their searches far into the ideal worlds ; others can conduct an army, or govern a nation. In short, every man forms some scheme which he apprehends will conduce to his temporal advantage ; and prosecutes it with some degree of judgment.

But is this all the wisdom that becomes a candidate for eternity ? Has he a good understanding who only acts with reason in the affairs of this life ; but, though he is to exist forever in another world, and to be perfectly happy or miserable there, yet takes no thought about the concerns of his immortal state ? Is this wisdom ? Is this consistent even with common sense ? No ; with sorrow and solemnity I would speak it, the most of men in this respect are fools and madmen ; and it is impossible for the most frantic madmen in Bedlam to act more foolishly about the affairs of this life, than they generally do about the affairs of religion and eternity. There is such a thing as a partial madness ; a person may have, as it were, one weak side to his mind, and it may be sound and rational in other respects. You may meet with some lunatics and madmen that will converse reasonably with you,

and you would not suspect their heads are disordered, till you touch upon some particular point, and then you are to expect reason from them no more ; they talk the wildest nonsense, and are governed entirely by their imaginations. Thus, alas! it is with the generality of mankind in the present case. They are wise for this world; they talk and act at least agreeably to common sense ; but hear them talk and observe their conduct about the concerns of their souls, and you can call them reasonable creatures no longer. They *are wise to do evil ; but to do good they have no knowledge : there is none that understandeth ; there is none that seeketh after God.* To bring them to themselves by exposing to them their madness, is my present design.

The text shews us the first step to true wisdom, and the test of common sense : *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* This is so frequently repeated, that it may pass for a scripture maxim : and we may be sure it is of singular importance. Job starts the question, *Where shall wisdom be found ? and where is the place of understanding ?* He searches nature through, in quest of it, but cannot find it : he cannot purchase it with the gold of Ophir ; and its price is above rubies. At length he recollects the primitive instruction of God to man, and there he finds it : *To man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job xxviii. 28. Solomon, the wisest of men, begins his proverbs with this maxim, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.* Prov. i. 7. And he repeats it again, Prov. ix. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and the knowledge of the holy* (the knowledge of those that may be called saints with a sneer) *is understanding.*

The fear of the Lord, in scripture, signifies not only that pious passion of filial reverence of our adorable Father who is in heaven, but it is frequently put for the whole of practical religion ; hence it is explained in the last part of the verse, by *doing his commandments.* The fear of the Lord, in this latitude, implies all the graces and all the virtues of christianity ; in short, all that holiness of heart and life which is necessary to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. So that the sense of the text is this : ‘ To practise religion and virtue, to take that way which leads to everlasting happiness, is wisdom, true wisdom, the beginning of wisdom, the first step towards it ; unless you begin here, you can never attain it ; all your wisdom without this, does not deserve

the name ; it is madness and nonsense. To do his commandments is the best test of a good understanding ; a good sound understanding have all they that do this, all of them without exception : however weak some of them may be in other things, they are wise in the most important respect ; but without this, however cunning they are in other things, they have lost their understandings ; they contradict common sense ; they are beside themselves. In short, to pursue everlasting happiness as the end, in the way of holiness as the mean, this is wisdom, this is common sense ; and there can be none without this.'

Wisdom consists in two things ; choosing a right end, and using right means to obtain it. Now what end so becoming a creature to live forever, as everlasting happiness ? And in what way can it be obtained, but in the way of holiness ? Consult the judgment of God in his word ; consult your own conscience, or even common sense, and you will find that this is the case. Therefore he is a man of sense that pursues this end in this way ; but he is a fool, he is brutish, that chooses an inferior end, or that pursues this in a wrong way.

My time will not allow me to do any more than to mention some instances of the folly and madness of such as do not make the fear of the Lord the beginning of their wisdom.

I. Men will not take the safest side in religion, which their reason and self-love carry them to do in other cases.

It is very possible the love of ease and pleasure, and a self-flattering disposition, may prompt your invention to form a plausible system of religion ; a religion that admits of great hopes with little evidences, and that allows you many indulgencies and lays few restraints upon you ; a religion purged, as you imagine, from some of the melancholy and gloomy doctrines of christianity, and that releases you from those restraints, so painful to a wicked heart, which the holy religion of Jesus lays upon you. It is very possible you may hope you shall obtain eternal happiness without much pains, and without observing the strictness of universal holiness ; you may indulge hopes of heaven, though you indulge yourselves willfully in sin ; you may flatter yourselves that God is not so inexorably just as the sacred scriptures represent him ; and that his threatenings are only tremendous sounds without any design to be executed in all their strictness ; you may flatter yourselves, that the punishments of a future state are not intolerably dreadful, nor of everlasting duration ; you may

excuse and diminish your sins, and make a great many plausible apologies for them. But are you sure of these things? Have you demonstration for them, upon which you may venture your eternal all? Think the matter over seriously again; have you certainty that these things are so? and are you willing to perish forever if they should be otherwise? What if you should be mistaken? What if you should find God as strict and holy as his word represents him? What if all his dreadful threatenings should be sincere and true, and your sins have infinitely greater malignity in his eyes than in yours? What if in a little time you should find that the scriptures give a more just account of the punishments of hell than your self-flattering heart suggested to you, and that they are indeed intolerable and strictly eternal? What if you should find, when it is too late to correct the mistake, that those neglected, ridiculous things, regeneration, conversion, holiness of heart and practice, the mortification of sin, and a laborious course of devotion—what if you should find they are absolutely necessary to everlasting happiness? What if it should appear that the wilful indulgence of the least known sin will eternally ruin you? Stand and pause, and ask yourselves, What if you should find matters thus, quite the reverse to what you flattered yourselves? What will become of you then? You are undone, irreparably undone through all eternity. Well, to speak modestly, this may be the case, for what you know; and is it not then the part of a wise man to provide against such a dreadful contingency? Will you run so terrible a risk, and yet claim a good understanding? Do you esteem a life of religion so burdensome, that you had better make such a desperate venture than choose it? Do you esteem the pleasures of sin so sweet, so solid, so lasting, that it is your interest to run the risk of intolerable, eternal misery, rather than part with them? Can you form such an estimate as this while in your senses? No, he is a madman with whom certain pleasures for a little time, the sordid pleasures of sin, outweigh an eternity of perfect happiness. He is certainly not in his right mind that would rather be tormented in hell forever, than lead an holy life, and labour to escape the wrath to come. Therefore act in this as you do in other cases of uncertainty, choose the safest side. Believe and regard what God has said; be holy in all manner of conversation; strive with all your might to enter in at the strait gate; accept of Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Do this, and you are safe, let the case be as it will;

there are no bad consequences that can possibly follow from this conduct. It will, upon the whole, be the most pleasant for you, even in this life ; and your reason will tell you, this is a more certain way to escape everlasting misery, and secure eternal happiness, than the contrary. But if you are resolutely set upon running the risk, and fool-hardy enough to venture your eternal all upon such improbabilities, not to say impossibilities, you forfeit the character of a reasonable being ; you are mad in this respect, however wise you may be in others.

II. Is it not the greatest folly to believe, or profess to believe, the great truths of religion, and yet act quite contrary to such a belief ?

How many are there who own God to be the greatest and the best of beings, and yet neglect him, and pay a greater regard to a thousand other things ! They own him lovely, and do not love him ; their King, and they do not obey him ; and their Benefactor, and make no returns of gratitude to him. They confess that heaven is better than earth, and yet they pursue the things of this life, to the neglect of all the happiness of heaven. They believe their souls are of more importance than their bodies ; and yet they will not take half the care about them that they take about their bodies. They confess that a life of sin and impenitence is very dangerous, and that it will end in everlasting misery ; yet, with this confession in their mouth, and this conviction in their consciences, they will, they obstinately will go on impenitently in sin. They own that religion and virtue are excellent things, and yet they never make it the main business of their life, but live carelessly without them. They believe they are sinners, worthy of punishment, and yet they are generally as unconcerned as if they were innocent. They believe that Christ is the only Saviour of sinners, and yet they are as little concerned to get an interest in him as if they could be saved without him. They believe that all the pleasures of this transitory life are infinitely inferior to the pleasures of religion and the happiness of the heavenly state ; they believe these pleasures will ruin them forever if they continue in them, and yet they will persist in them, though by this they throw away their everlasting happiness, and incur eternal misery ! Thus they believe, or profess to believe ; and our country is full of such believers ; but what absurd, self-contradicting creatures are they ! What madness is it to entertain a belief that

answers no other end but to condemn their practice, and aggravate their sin ! Do they really believe these things, or do they not ? if not, what folly is it to profess to believe them ? Do they think to impose by an empty profession on Him who searches the hearts and the reins ? or have they no other end in their profession of religion, than just to be esteemed christians by men ? Can they think that their faith will indemnify them in contradicting it ? or that they may sin safely, because they sin against knowledge ? Are these the conclusions of a sound mind ? Must not a man be out of his senses before he can admit them ? But if you suppose they believe these things, it is certain they are entirely mad in this affair. What ! to neglect God, and holiness, and heaven, when they know they are of infinite importance ! to choose the ways of sin, when they believe they will end in ruin ! Is this the part of a wise man ? Should a sick man tell you he is certain to die unless he takes such a medicine, and yet you should see that he does not take it, but continues to drink the most deadly poison, what would you think of him ? Would you not conclude either that he did not believe himself, or that he was distracted ? But this is the very conduct of many professed believers, who yet think they have no small share of wisdom. I will not dispute your wisdom about your secular affairs ; you may be wise to do evil ; but I am sure in these instances you are quite delirious ; and yourselves will be convinced of it to your cost, when God shall say unto you, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.* Luke xii. 20.

All your pleas to vindicate or excuse your conduct do but aggravate your folly. Do you say, " Your lusts are head-strong and ungovernable, and you cannot restrain them ?" I doubt not but this is true ; but is this a reason why you should be so easy and careless ? Are your enemies so strong ? And will you, on that very account, be faint and inactive in your resistance ? Ought you not to rise and cry to God for his grace to change your nature, to subdue these strong sins, and make you holy, since without it you cannot be saved ? Besides, consider whether your pretended excuse be not a real aggravation. " Your lusts are so strong, you say, that you cannot restrain them." What is this but to say that you are so wicked, that you have no heart to break off from sin ? and is the inveteracy of your wickedness an excuse for it ? Does not common sense remonstrate against such an absurdity ? Do you plead, that " you intend to repent

of this inconsistent conduct hereafter ?" But if religion is an excellent thing, as you profess to believe it, why do you not choose it now ? the sooner the better. Again, is it not the greatest folly to indulge yourselves in a practice that you deliberately intend to repent of ? If your present conduct be wise, why do you intend to repent of it ? the very intention implies that you are even now convinced it is foolish ; and what will your repentance be but a deep sense of your folly ? And can there be a greater madness than deliberately to do any thing which at the very time you intend to repent of ? Is there any thing more absurd and ridiculous ? Is this your conduct in other things ? Will you make a bargain, which you know you will afterwards repent of ? Will you prosecute a scheme which you deliberately intend afterwards to condemn and be sorry for ? Can you do such things, and yet take it ill to be called fools ? Further, why do you design to repent ? Is it because you hate sin ? No ; for if that was the reason, you would immediately forsake it. Is it because you love God and holiness ? No ; for then you would devote yourselves to the service of God immediately, and could not bear a delay. But you intend to force yourselves upon a little remorse of conscience, when the punishment of sin is just ready to fall upon you, with no other design but just to escape it. And can you think there is any value in such extorted sorrows, that proceed not from hatred of sin, or love to God, but merely from self-love, and a servile fear of punishment ? Can any wise man look upon this as repentance to life, or hope that God will accept of it ? Finally, are you sure of that uncertain hereafter, in which you purpose to repent ? Is there any man in his senses that dare pretend he is certain of another day ? or that he shall not die by some sudden accident, or in a delirium, in which he has no time nor composure to repent ?

III. Is it not the greatest folly for men to pretend to love God, when their temper and conduct are inconsistent with it, and plainly evidential of the contrary ?

If you go round the world with the question, " Do you love God ? do you love him above all ?" you will hardly meet with any one but what will answer, " Yes, to be sure ; I have loved him all my life." Well, but where are the evidences and effects of this love ? If you pretend friendship to men, they expect the expressions of it from you on every occasion ; otherwise they will see through the pretence, and pronounce it flattery. They

expect you should often think of them with tender affection, perform them all the good offices in your power, study to please them, be tender of their characters, solicitous about their interest, and delight in their society. These are the inseparable effects of love; and certainly, if you love God, your love will have such effects, especially since, if you love him at all with sincerity, you love him above all other persons and things. But men will insist upon it that they love him above all, and yet very seldom or never think of him with tender affection: they love him above all, and yet indulge themselves in sin, that abominable thing, which he hates: they love him above all, and yet have little solicitude about pleasing him, and doing his will: they love him above all, and yet are unconcerned about the interests of religion in the world, which are his interests, and careless about his honour and glory: they love him above all, and yet have no pleasure in conversing with him in prayer, and the other ordinances of his grace, where he holds spiritual interviews with his people. They love him above all, and yet love and delight in a thousand other things more than him; and they would highly resent it if one should begin to question the sincerity of their love; and they hope God will accept of it, and reward it. But can men in their senses think that this will pass for true and supreme love with him, that knows all things? They cannot expect that their fellow-creatures should thus be imposed upon; and is it not the greatest madness to imagine they can thus impose upon Omniscience? Indeed it may astonish any man that knows what love is, to find that the most of men pretend they love God, even while they are giving the most glaring evidences of disaffection to him; and after all, it is almost impossible to convince them that they do not thoroughly love him. What madness has seized the world, that they will not receive conviction in such a plain case! What mean thoughts must they have of God, when they think to put him off with such an empty compliment, and hypocritical profession!

IV. Is it not the greatest folly for men to hope for heaven, when they have no evidences at all of their title to it, or fitness for it?

Is it not the dictate of common sense, that no man can be happy in any thing but what he has a relish for, and delights in? Can an illiterate rustic find pleasure in rigid mathematical demon-

strations, and learned speculations, or a man of pleasure and business in the ascetic mortified life of a hermit? Can a man, whose taste is vitiated by sickness, enjoy happiness in the entertainments of a feast? No, nothing can make a man happy, but what is suited to his relish and disposition. And yet there are thousands that have no relish for the enjoyment of God, no pleasure in thinking of him, or conversing with him, no delight in his service and acts of devotion, who yet hope to be forever completely happy in these exercises in heaven. The happiness of heaven, as I have often told you, consists in such things as these, and how can you hope to be happy there while you have no pleasure in them! There are thousands who have no delight in any thing holy or religious, but only in the gratifications of their senses and the enjoyment of earthly things, who yet hope to be happy in heaven, in the wants of all sensual and earthly enjoyments. There are thousands who now disgust the society of the religious as intolerably precise, who yet flatter themselves they shall be perfectly happy in the company of saints and angels, where the meanest is incomparably more holy than the most sanctified creature upon earth. And have they a sound understanding who can entertain such absurd hopes? Does not common sense tell us, that God, who does every thing wisely, will bring none to heaven but those whom he has made fit for it beforehand? and that as none shall be sent to hell but those that were previously wicked, so none shall be admitted into the world of glory but those who are previously made holy? None first begin to be holy in heaven or wicked in hell: both parties bring with them those dispositions which are fit for their respective places and employments. How absurd is it therefore to hope for heaven, while you have no heavenly dispositions! You may as well hope to see the sun without eyes. Further, God has assured you in his word, and you profess to believe him, that without regeneration, faith, repentance, and interest in Christ, and universal holiness, you cannot enter into his kingdom; and yet, are there not some of you who are foolish enough to hope for it, though destitute of all these? Has he not told you that drunkards, swearers, unclean, malicious, contentious persons, liars, and the like, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven? And yet, though you know these are your characters, and the world knows it too, you will hope for admission to it, in defiance of God's most express repeated declarations! What madness is this! and how

peculiar to this affair! The debauchee will not expect happiness in mortification and devotion, nor the prodigal in hoarding up useless wealth; and yet thus absurdly will they act in their expectations of heaven!

V. And lastly, Is it not the greatest madness to be more concerned about the affairs of time than those of eternity?

It is plain to any man in his senses, that the happiness and misery which are extreme, and which shall endure forever, are of infinitely greater importance than all the enjoyments and all the sufferings of this transitory state. And you will hardly meet with any man but will own this to be his belief. But, alas! into what consternation may it strike us, when we survey the conduct of the generality! Are they as much concerned about the eternal world to which they are hastening, as to the concerns of time? Are they as laborious and zealous to obtain everlasting happiness as to gain the riches of this world, or to gratify their sensual appetites? Are they as solicitous to avoid everlasting misery as to shun sickness, poverty, or any temporal calamity! Are they as cautious of sinning, which ruins their souls forever, as of drinking poison, which may endanger their health or temporal life! Do not many of you know it is quite the reverse with you! Are not the concerns of this life the principal objects of your thoughts, your cares, and labours! And what can be a more consummate folly! You practically prefer a trifle of an hour to a substantial good of endless duration. You are careless about everlasting torment, and yet cautiously shun the light sufferings of a few moments. It matters not what you think, or say in this matter; it is your practice that determines the affair; and does not that shew that time outweighs a vast eternity with you? And what can be more absurd! If you should throw away an estate to obtain a farthing, if you should run upon a drawn sword to escape a prickle, if you should prefer pebbles to crowns and kingdoms, darkness to light, or one luxurious meal to the support of your whole life, it would not be so shocking a piece of madness.

I might give you many more instances of the madness of those who do not begin this wisdom with the fear of the Lord, but the inferences from the subject are so numerous and important, that I must reserve the rest of the time for them.

1. Since there is so much folly in the world in matters of religion, how astonishing is it that it is not universally contemned and ridiculed, or pitied and lamented! If men act a foolish part in

other things, they soon furnish matter of laughter and contempt to the gay and witty part of mankind; and the thoughtful and benevolent view them with compassion. But let them act ever so foolishly in the concerns of eternity, there is hardly any notice taken of it; the absurdity is no way shocking; nay, the generality commend their conduct by imitating it themselves; and if any are so wise as to find fault with this madness, they are termed fools themselves, and the general laugh is turned against them. How unaccountable is this, that men who act prudently in other things, and are easily shocked with a mad and frantic behaviour, can view the folly of mankind in this respect without horror, or perhaps with approbation! The only reason for it is, that the generality are madmen in this respect, and the folly is approved because it is common. To be singularly wise is to be foolish, in the opinion of the world; and to be fools with the multitude, is the readiest way to get the reputation of wisdom. They prove religion to be folly, by a majority of votes; and as many who are fools in this affair are wise in other respects, their judgment is implicitly submitted to. But, pray, Sirs, use your own reason, and judge impartially for yourselves, and I am sure you must see the wild absurdity of their conduct. Be nobly singular in beginning wisdom with the fear of the Lord; and whatever others think of you now, God, angels, and good men will applaud your wisdom: and even those who now ridicule it, will approve of it at last.

2. With what an ill grace do the irreligious contemn and despise those that make religion their great concern, as weak, silly creatures! Sinners, let your own reason determine, can there be any thing more foolish than your own behaviour? And does it become you to brand others with the odium of folly? Alas! you have reason to turn your contempt upon yourselves, and to be struck with horror at your own wilful stupidity. Do you set yourselves up as the standards of wisdom, who want sense to keep out of everlasting ruin? Are you wise men, who throw away your eternal happiness for the trifles of time? No, they only are wise who are wise for eternity. You may excel them in a thousand things; nature may have favoured you with a better genius; you may have had a more liberal education; you may be better acquainted with men and books; you may manage your secular affairs with more discretion; in such things you may be wiser than many of them. But they are wise for eternity! they have sense to escape everlasting burnings! they have wisdom to ob-

tain eternal happiness ! and this is a more important piece of wisdom than all your acquisitions. The wisdom of Solomon, of Socrates, or Plato, is the wildest madness without this. How absurd is it therefore for you, without this, to arrogate the character of men of wisdom, or even of common sense !

3. How absurd is it for men to pretend they will not turn their thoughts to religion, lest it should make them melancholy or distracted ? Alas ! sinners, you cannot be more so than you are already ; and you will never come to yourselves till, with the prodigal, you determine to return to your father's house. And will you continue fools through the fear of becoming such ? I can assure you I would rather be the wildest frantic in Bedlam, than be that wretch who ruins his soul for fear of running mad by thinking of it.

4. If the fear of the Lord, religion, is the perfection of wisdom, how unreasonably does the world charge it with making people mad ? There are multitudes that lose their senses by excessive sorrows and anxieties about some temporal affair ; many more than by religion ; and yet they never fall out with the world on this account. But when any one, that seemed thoughtful about religion, loses his senses, then religion be sure must bear all the blame ; and sinners are glad to catch at such a handle to expose it. Melancholy persons are wont to derive terrors from every thing in their reach ; and, among other things, will pore upon all those doctrines of religion that can affright them. But this melancholy, as such, is a bodily disorder, and therefore has no more religion in it than a fever or a consumption. It is indeed very possible that too intense application of the mind to divine things, with a deep concern about our everlasting state, may be the occasion of melancholy ; but there is nothing peculiar in this ; let the mind be excessively attentive to any thing, it will have the same effect. How many disorders do men contract by their eager pursuit of the world ? and yet the world is their favourite still. But if one here and there suffers by occasion of religion, O ! they bless themselves from it, and think it is a terrible gloomy thing.— Those that are pious, let me tell you, are many of them much superior to the wisest of us in all accomplishments ; and they are generally as far from madness as their neighbours. Therefore drop this senseless slander, and be yourselves holy, if you would be truly wise.

5. Since men are such fools in matters of religion, since they censure it with so much severity and contempt, how astonishing is it that God should send down that divine, heaven-born thing, religion, into our world, where it is so much neglected and abused! Where the celestial guest meets with but few hearts that will entertain it; where its professors neglect it, contradict it, and by their practice call it madness; and where even its friends and subjects frequently treat it very unkindly! What astonishing condescension and grace is it, that God has not left our mad world to themselves, since they are so averse to be reclaimed! But lo! he hath sent his Son, he hath instituted the gospel, and a thousand means of grace, to bring them to themselves!

6. And lastly, Hence we may infer, that human nature is exceedingly depraved and disordered. I think this is as plain as any disorder incident to the body. Men are universally indisposed as to religion; and on this account our world is, as a great genius calls it, 'the Bedlam of the universe.' The same natural faculties, the same understanding, will, and affections, that render us able to act with prudence in the affairs of this life, are also sufficient for the affairs of religion; but, alas! with regard to this, they are disordered, though they exercise themselves aright about other things. They can acquire the knowledge of languages and sciences; but, alas! they have no disposition to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.—They understand how to trade, and carry on schemes for this world; but they will not act wisely for eternity. They have sense enough not to run into the fire, or to drink poison; but they will run on in the ways of sin to everlasting misery. They will ask the way when they have lost themselves; but how hard is it to bring them to inquire, What shall I do to be saved? They will ask help for their bodies from their fellow-creatures, but how hard is it to bring them in the posture of earnest petitioners to ask immortal blessings for their souls from God! In short, they can contrive with prudence, and act with vigour, courage, and perseverance, in the affairs of time; but in the concerns of religion and eternity they are ignorant, stupid, languid, and careless. And how can we account for this, but by supposing that they are degenerate creatures, and that their nature has suffered a dreadful shock by the first fall, which has deprived them of their senses? Alas! this is a truth too evident to be denied!

Sermon 39.

REJECTION OF CHRIST A COMMON, BUT MOST UNREASONABLE INIQUITY.

MARK XII. 6.—*Having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son.*

THERE is no sin more common or more pernicious in the christian world, than an unsuitable reception of Jesus Christ and the gospel. It is not only the sin of professed unbelievers and profane scoffers, but it often hides itself under the cloak of religion, and a profession of faith. It is of so subtle a nature, that it is often unsuspected, even by those who are destroyed by it: and it is of so deadly a nature, that nothing can save a soul under the power of it. A soul that has the offer of Christ and the gospel, and yet neglects him, is certainly in a perishing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. John iii. 18.

This was the sin of the Jews in Christ's time, and this brought temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To represent this sin in a convictive light, is the primary design of this parable.

The blessed God had chosen the Jews, out of the world, to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them with the gracious privileges of his church. Hence they are represented as his vineyard, enclosed from the wilderness of the world, and furnished with every thing necessary to render it fruitful. And hence God is represented as expecting fruit from them, as a man expects it from his vineyard; which intimates the reasonableness of their obedience: it is what any one would expect, who would judge by what is due and reasonable. But it does not intimate that God does properly look for or expect what will never come to pass; for the certainty and universality of his fore-knowledge excludes all possibility of a disappointment. It is speaking to us in our own language, which we are most likely to understand; but it must be explained agreeably to the perfection of the nature

of God, and not according to the imperfection of ours. The scribes and pharisees, the priests and rulers of the Jews, who were entrusted with the management of their church and state, are represented by the husbandmen, to whom this vineyard was leased or rented, and they were obliged to make annual payments of a part of the fruit. The succession of servants sent to demand the income of fruit in its season, signifies the prophets and other messengers of God sent to the Jews to call them to bring forth the fruits of holiness. But, instead of obeying the call, they treated them abusively, persecuted and killed them, and refused that return of duty which God demanded, and which his distinguishing mercies towards them rendered so due upon the footing of gratitude. After repeated trials, to no purpose, by these servants, the great God resolves to make one trial more, and that by his own Son, his only Son, his beloved Son. Him he will send to these rebellious husbandmen. And he presumes that, bad as they are, they would at least reverence his Son, and count themselves highly honoured in having such a messenger sent to them. He might justly have sent his army to destroy them, who had murdered his former servants; but instead of this, he sends his Son with proposals of peace once more. He presumes such clemency will melt down the rebels, and make them ashamed of their former conduct. *They will reverence my Son:* as if he should say, "Though they have wickedly abused and slain my servants, surely they will not dare to treat my Son in the same manner. Surely, the very sight of him must command awe and reverence. This will also make them ashamed of their base ingratitude and cruelty to my former messengers."*

When the omniscient God represents himself as presuming or expecting that they would receive his Son in a friendly manner, it does not intimate, as I just observed in a similar case, that he is defective in knowledge as to things future, or liable to disappointment; but it only expresses, in the strongest manner, the reasonableness of the thing expected. It is so reasonable, that any one who judges only according to the reasonableness of the thing, and has no view of futurity, would certainly look for it. It is so reasonable, that God himself would expect it, were he not omniscient, and incapable of being deceived by the most plausible appear-

* The word, ἐντρέπομαι, signifies *to be flushed with shame*, as well as *to reverence:* and so it may be rendered here, "They will be struck with shame at my Son;" that is, at "the sight of him."

ances. In this view God expected (that is, he looked upon it as infinitely reasonable) that the Jewish rulers should reverence his Son. But, alas! when they saw him, they were raised to a still higher pitch of rebellion and cruelty. They seized the Son himself, cast him out of his own vineyard, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him. On this account the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others, who should pay the great Proprietor his fruit in its season; that is, they were cast out of the church, and the Gentiles received in their stead, who would make a better use of their privileges.

This is the primary sense of the parable, as referring to the Jews of that age. But it will admit of a more extensive application. It reaches us in these ends of the earth, and all the nations of the world, to whom the gospel has been proposed: and in this latitude I would consider the text.

The world had gone on for four thousand years in wickedness, in spite of all the means used for its reformation by lawgivers, prophets, and philosophers, and by the providence of God. Persuasions, warnings, chastisements, mercies, and whatever had a tendency to bring them to repentance, had been used with them. Philosophers had often reasoned; legislators had prescribed; prophets had carefully instructed, allured with promises, and deterred with threatenings, and carried their heavenly credentials in their hands; angels had appeared and conversed with men upon extraordinary occasions; Jesus the great angel of the covenant, had given frequent preludes of his incarnation; nay, Jehovah himself had descended, and published his law with God-like pomp in the ears of his subjects on mount Sinai. But all this would not do; the world sinned on still, impenitent and incorrigible. And what shall be done in such a desperate case? What expedient remains to be tried? After so many messengers abused, persecuted and killed, who will go upon so dangerous a message again? There is indeed the Son of God, the great co-equal of the Supreme Divinity, if he would undertake it, perhaps something might be done. But O! who can dare to hope for such condescension from one so high! Who can expect such a favour for rebels ripe for vengeance! Who can hope the Father will give him up! My text seems to hint sundry objections against it. He is his Son, his well-beloved Son, and he has but one Son; but one of his rank, though he has produced so many worlds. And will he part with

his Son, his well-beloved, his only Son, and send him upon such a mission ; a mission so difficult, so dangerous, in which so many of his servants have lost their lives ? Who could believe that even divine love and mercy could go so far, had we not the testimony of God in the gospel for it ! *Having one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also ;* he sent even* him, dear as he was, as well as his servants of an inferior order. So much had he at heart the salvation of his rebellious creatures !

But observe the time when he sent him : He sent him last. He did not send him till every other method was tried in vain, and the case was found to be desperate without him. He did not send him till it appeared, from many experiments, that there was absolute need of him. Lawgivers, prophets, philosophers, and other real or pretended reformers, had a clear stage, they had the world to themselves for four thousand years ; but in all this time they did nothing to the purpose. Hence we are led to make this remark, which is of great importance to the right understanding of the gospel.

That the Son of God was sent into the world as a Saviour in a desperate case. It appeared, after a long course of trial, that when he undertook the case, there was no relief from any other quarter. And hence, by the way, it follows, that we can never receive him in that view in which he was sent, until we are deeply sensible that our case is desperate ; that is, that we can obtain relief from no other.

But probably his being sent last has a farther meaning. It seems to intimate, that he is the last extraordinary messenger that God will ever send ; that the dispensation of the gospel is the last trial that ever he will make with rebellious men, the final effort of divine grace for their salvation ; and that such as are not recovered by it will be forever given up as desperate, and no farther means used with them. What an alarming thought is this to such of you (and no doubt there are such among you) who have enjoyed the gospel, the dispensation of the Son of God all your days, without receiving any special benefit from it ! If these means will not do, you are not to expect better, but must perish as incurables.

If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, as his Father's only and well-

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*—Καὶ ἀυτὸν. The conjunction καὶ often signifies *even* ; and if so rendered here, it would perhaps be more emphatical.

beloved Son, we could have little reason to expect he would come into our world as a Saviour. But suppose he should come ! suppose he should leave all the glories of his native heaven, and assume the humble nature of man, converse with mortals, instead of the heavenly courtiers, and conflict with the calamities of life, instead of enjoying the pleasures of paradise ! Suppose he should come himself, as a messenger of his Father's grace, and with his own blessed lips assure our guilty race that God is reconcileable ! Suppose he should die upon a cross for us, that he might at once purchase redemption, and confirm the tidings of it ! Suppose, I say, such wonders as these should happen ! what then is to be expected ? O ! may it not reasonably be expected that this divine Messenger will be received with universal welcome ? that every heart will glow with his love, and every mouth be filled with his praise ? May it not be reasonably expected that his appearance among guilty men would cast them all upon the knee as humble penitents, and that now, overcome with his love, they would become his willing subjects for the future, and bitterly lament the baseness and ingratitude of their past disobedience ? Is not this the most reasonable expectation that ever was formed ? God speaks after the manner of men in my text : and therefore, when he says, *They will reverence my Son*, it intimates, that this would be the universal expectation of mankind, and of all reasonable creatures who consider the reasonableness of the thing. " They will reverence my Son : surely they will. Wicked and ungrateful as they are, the very sight of him must melt them into gratitude and obedience. Though they have rejected, persecuted, and murdered prophets and lawgivers, and all my other servants, yet surely they will reverence my Son." O ! is not this a most reasonable expectation ? Who would apprehend the contrary in so plain a case ! Who would fear that such a divine Saviour, a Saviour in so desperate a case, should be received with neglect ! Who would fear that sinners, on the brink of everlasting destruction, would be careless about such a Deliverer ! We cannot think they would act thus, without supposing them madmen, as well as sinners, and that they have lost their reason and self-love, as well as moral goodness.

But, alas ! these are only the presumptions of reason from the reasonableness of the thing, and not matters of fact gathered from observation of the actual conduct of mankind. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will universally meet

with an affectionate reception from creatures that stand in such absolute need of him, and however improbable it be, in an abstract view, that such creatures should neglect him, yet it is a melancholy notorious fact, that Jesus Christ has but little of the reverence and love of mankind. The prophetical character given of him long ago by Isaiah still holds true, *He whom man despiseth; he whom the nations abhor*, Isaiah xlix. 7. *he is despised and rejected of men.* The riches, honours, and pleasures of the world are preferred to him. His creatures are loved more than himself. Nay, sin itself, the most hateful thing upon earth, or even in hell, is more beloved. The salvation he purchased with his blood is looked upon as hardly worth seeking. His favour is not earnestly sought, nor his displeasure carefully shunned. In short, he has but a small place, and is but of little importance in the thoughts, the affections, and conversation of mankind. This is a most melancholy and astonishing thing; it may spread amazement and horror through the whole universe, but, alas! it is a fact; a plain fact, though but few are convinced of it, and a melancholy fact, though few lament it. My chief design at present is to fasten conviction upon the guilty; a very unacceptable design, but not therefore the less necessary or useful.

In prosecuting it, I intend,

I. To shew what kind of reception it may justly be expected we should give to the Son of God.

II. To consider the reasonableness of that expectation. And,

III. And lastly, To shew how different a reception he generally meets with from what might be reasonably expected.

Hearken, my brethren, hearken attentively, to what you are so nearly concerned in. And to engage your attention the more, let this consideration have weight with you, that your making light of this matter is a strong presumption that you make light of Christ, and do not give him that reception which he demands. Your being unconcerned in the trial of this case is sufficient to prove you guilty. I am,

I. To shew you what kind of reception we may reasonably be expected to give to the Son of God.

In general, we should give him a reception agreeable to the character which he sustains, and agreeable to the designs upon which he was sent into our world, or to those views in which he appears in it. We should treat every one according to his character: reason expects that we should do so, and God requires it.

Therefore we should treat this divine Messenger according to his character.

More particularly, does Jesus Christ appear in our world under the character of a Saviour in a desperate case, a relief for the remediless, a helper for the helpless? Then it may reasonably be expected that his appearing in our world under this character would immediately flash universal conviction upon mankind, that they are altogether undone and helpless in themselves, and can obtain relief from no other quarter. It may reasonably be expected that they should give up all their proud self-righteous conceit of themselves, and abandon all trust in their own righteousness and good works; for till they do this, they can never receive him in the character; that is, as a Saviour in a desperate case. It may reasonably be expected, they should welcome Christ as the great, the only Deliverer, and give up themselves entirely to him, to be saved by him, who alone is mighty to save. And it may reasonably be expected, that every heart should be transported with admiration, joy, and gratitude at his appearance: and a contrary temper towards him can proceed from nothing but stupid ignorance of our sin and danger, and an ungrateful, base disaffection to him.

Does Jesus appear among men as a great High-Priest, making atonement for sin? Then it may justly be expected that we should place all our trust upon the virtue of his atonement, and that all hands should be eagerly stretched out to receive those pardons which he offers, in consequence of his propitiatory sacrifice. Does he appear to destroy the works of the devil, and to save men from sin by making them holy, and are the influences of the holy Spirit intrusted to his disposal to renew their nature and implant every grace and virtue in their hearts? Then, who would not expect that we would all fall in with his design, all form a noble conspiracy against sin, seek for the sanctification of our hearts, and earnestly apply to him for the influences of divine grace to make us holy! Again, does Christ appear in the character of a mediatorial King, invested with all power in heaven and earth, and demanding universal homage? Then it may reasonably be expected that we should all bow the knee in humble submission, all make his will the rule of our conduct, and labour after universal obedience. Further, does he appear both as the publisher and the brightest demonstration of the Father's love? and has he discovered his own love by the many labours of his life, and by the

agonies and tortures of his cross? O! may it not be expected we should return him love for love! the love of worms for the love of a God! an obediential love for his bleeding, dying love! May it not be expected that the sight of a crucified Saviour, dying in agonies of love and pain, should melt every heart, and draw the whole world to his arms! He himself had this reasonable expectation: *I*, says he, *if I be lifted from the earth* (that is, suspended on the cross) *will draw all men unto me.* If such love will not draw, what can do it? May it not be expected that this strong assurance that their offended Sovereign is reconcileable, and so much in earnest to pardon obnoxious rebels, would at length make them sensible of their base ingratitude, would melt them down into ingenuous generous sorrows for their unnatural rebellion against so good a God, and determine them to cheerful obedience in future? Again, does Christ exhibit himself as able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and as willing as able, as gracious as powerful? Then may it not reasonably be expected that all the unbelieving fears and tremblings of desponding penitents should vanish forever, that they should all fly to his arms with cheerful hope and humble confidence, and do him the honour, and themselves the kindness to believe themselves safe, upon their compliance with his invitation? Further, does Christ appear in the character of a great Prophet sent to publish his Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God, and to shew the way in which guilty sinners may be reconciled to God? a way which all the philosophers and sages of antiquity, after all their perplexing searches, could never discover! May it not then be reasonably expected that we should be all attention to his instructions, that we should resign our understandings to him as our Teacher, and readily believe what he has revealed, and particularly that we should cheerfully comply with the only method of salvation contained in the gospel? Once more, Does Christ assume the august character of supreme Judge of the quick and the dead, and must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Then it may be expected we should all humbly revere and adore him, fear to offend him and make him our enemy, and prepare for our appearance before him. In short, considering him as the supreme Excellency, it is infinitely reasonable we should love and esteem him as the Physician of sick souls; that we should put ourselves under his all-healing hands, and submit to his prescriptions; as our

Advocate, that we should present all our petitions in his name, and depend upon his intercession for acceptance. And as he is all in all in the mediatorial dispensation of religion under which we live, the only religion for sinners, that he should be all in all to us.

This is a brief view of the reception which we ought to give to the Son of God, upon his appearance in our world. Unless we receive him thus, we can receive no benefit from him ; but must incur the aggravated guilt of rejecting him. *But to as many as thus receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe in his name.* John i. 12.

Do not imagine that none are concerned to give him a proper reception but those with whom he conversed in the days of his flesh. We at the distance of 1700 years, and six or seven thousand miles from the time and place of his appearance in human form, are as much concerned with him as they. He is an ever-present Saviour, and he left his gospel on earth in his stead, when he went to heaven. It is with the motion of the mind, and not of the body, that sinners must come to him ; and in this sense we may come to him, as properly as those that conversed with him. He demands the reverence, love, and trust of mankind now, as well as seventeen hundred years ago ; and we need his righteousness, his influence, and his salvation, as well as the sinners of Judea, among whom he appeared in person. Nay, as his glory has now pierced through the cloud that obscured it in the days of his flesh, and as he is exalted to the height of honour and dignity, it may be expected with still more reason that we should reverence him, and submit to him in his high character. He is not now the object of our bodily senses, we cannot see and handle him ; but he is now an object for the acts of the mind with peculiar advantage. That must be a mere lump of flesh, or a beast, and not a man, that can love nothing but what he can see and feel. Spiritual and intellectual things are the most proper objects for all reasonable creatures. Therefore, though Jesus be not now within reach of our senses, yet reason and faith may reach him, and perceive his glories : and it is reasonably expected we should admire, love, trust, and serve him. This, I say, is reasonably expected of us. I now proceed,

II. To shew the reasonableness of the expectation, that we should give the Son of God a welcome reception.

Here full evidence must strike every mind at first sight. Is there not infinite r eason that infinite beauty and excellence should

be esteemed and loved? that supreme authority should be obeyed, and the highest character revered? Is it not reasonable that the most amazing display of love and mercy should meet with the most affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged? shall the Creator die for his creatures, the Sovereign for his rebellious subjects, the great law-giver transfer the penalty of his own law upon himself, in order to remove it from obnoxious criminals? shall he die in extremities of torture, and write his love in characters of blood? O shall he do this, and is it not infinitely reasonable that his creatures, that his rebellious subjects, that obnoxious criminals should be transported with wonder, joy, and gratitude; and that such miracles of love should engross their thoughts, their affections, and conversation? If we form our expectations from what we find in fact among mankind in other cases, sure we may expect the Son of God would meet with such a reception in our world; the thousandth part of this kindness would excite gratitude between man and man, and he would be counted a monster that would not be moved with it. And shall kindness from worm to worm, from sinner to sinner, excite love and gratitude? and shall not the infinite mercy of God towards rebellious creatures inflame their love and gratitude? Is this the only species of kindness that must pass unnoticed? Is Jesus the only Benefactor that must be forgotten? Is it not reasonable, and would not any one expect, that the perishing would willingly accept of a Saviour? that the guilty would stretch out an eager hand to receive a pardon? that the diseased would apply to the physician? that inexcusable offenders should repent of their causeless offences against the best of beings? and that needy dependent creatures should embrace the offer of happiness? Can any thing be more reasonably expected than this? Is it not as reasonable as to expect that creatures that love themselves, will seek their own happiness, or that the miserable will accept of deliverance? In short, no man can deny the reasonableness of this expectation without denying himself to be a creature: no man can deny its reasonableness, without asserting that the highest excellency should be despised, the highest authority rejected, the richest goodness contemned, that rebellion and ingratitude is a virtue, and self-destruction a duty; that is, no man can deny this, without commencing a monster, abjuring his reason, and embracing the most extravagant and impious absurdities in its stead. I am afraid I shall not be able to gain the temper and practice of all of you to

my side in this affair, but I am sure if you are men, and believe the gospel, I have already brought over your judgment and conscience. Your judgment and conscience declare, that if it be reasonable for a child to reverence a tender affectionate parent, if it be reasonable you should love your life, or your own happiness, that then certainly it is infinitely reasonable you should give such a reception as has been mentioned to the blessed Jesus. Happy for us, happy for the world, if we could as easily prove that the expectation is as much founded upon actual facts as upon reason. But, alas! here the evidence turns against us. In such a wicked disordered world as this, it would be a very deceitful method of reasoning, to infer that things are, because they should be. This introduces what comes next under consideration, namely,

III. And lastly, To shew how different a reception the Son of God generally meets with in our world, from what might reasonably be expected.

Here a most melancholy scene opens. And O! that it may please the blessed Spirit to affect our hearts deeply with the survey of it! Forgive me if I make my address as pungent and particular as I can, and speak directly to the conscience of each of you. The case really requires plain dealing, because without it you are not likely to be convinced, and, without conviction, you can never return, nor be reformed.

Let me put you all upon a serious search, what kind of reception you have given to Jesus Christ. You have lived all your days under his gospel; you profess his religion; you own him as the Author of your hopes: and what kind of treatment have you given him in these circumstances? It is high time for you to inquire into your behaviour.

Are not some of you sensible that you have never received him as a Saviour in a desperate case? No, you have never seen your case to be indeed desperate. Your proud hearts have not been brought so low. You have not had such an affecting view of your guilt and depravity, and the imperfections of your best works, and of the holiness and justice of God and his law, as to make you sensible you were undone and helpless in yourselves, that your own righteousness could by no means recommend you to God, and that you must perish forever, unless Jesus Christ, out of mere mercy, would undertake to save you: unless you have had an affecting sense of your undone condition, you have certainly never received him as a Saviour.

Again, Is it not evident that Jesus Christ has had but little share in your thoughts and affections? Do not the things of this perishing world gain the pre-eminence? Have you not a thousand thoughts of a thousand trifles, for one affectionate thought of Jesus, the darling of his Father? Have you not been generally thoughtless of him all your lives? Take the time that is nearest to you as a specimen, which surely you have not yet forgot. Recollect now how many affectionate thoughts you have had of him the week past, or even upon this sacred morning, when you had this solemn worship immediately in view. May not even this short review convince you that you are guilty of the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the world; a thing which appears so improbable in an abstract view, that one would hardly believe you would venture upon it; I mean neglecting the Son of God, who has visited our world upon such designs of love?

Again, Is Jesus Christ the favourite subject of your conversation? Is his dear name the sweetest sound your lips can pronounce? And do you love to sit with his few friends in our guilty world, and talk over the wonder of his love, till your hearts burn within you, like the disciples in conference on the way to Emmaus? *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;* and were he uppermost in your hearts, he would have a proper share in your conversation. Or if you should mingle in a company (and such company is every where to be found) where prudence would not suffer you to dwell upon this darling subject, would the restraint be painful to you, and would his love, like a smothered fire in your hearts, struggle to break out, and vent itself—vent itself at least in some retired corner in his presence, if you could not enjoy the pleasure of letting it flame out in the society of his creatures? But, alas! is not this the reverse of your true character? Are you not disgusted, or struck silent as soon as the conversation takes this turn? With horror I think of it—to converse concerning Jesus Christ is generally deemed needless, impertinent, or ostentatious, by creatures that profess themselves his disciples, redeemed by his blood! And does not this horrid guilt fasten upon some of you?

Farther, are not your hearts destitute of his love? If you deny the charge, and profess that you love him, where are the inseparable fruits and effects of his love? Where are your eager desires and pantings after him? Where is your delight to converse with

him in his ordinances? Where your anxiety, your zeal, your earnest endeavours to secure his favour? Where is your conscientious observance of his commandments? For he himself has made this the test of your love to him; *then*, says he, *are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14. And again, *If any man love me, he will keep my words.* John xiv. 28. Does not the evidence, from this inquiry, turn against you? Are you not convicted in your consciences, that if these are the inseparable fruits of love, you are entirely destitute of it? Is it not evident to yourselves, that your own pleasure, your own worldly interest, your honour or ease, is the general rule of your conduct, without any regard to his will?

Inquire farther, Have you learned to intrust your souls in his hands, to be saved by him entirely in his own way! Or do you not depend, in part at least, upon your own imaginary goodness? Do you not wonder and start at the doctrine of grace, and secretly disgust it! Does it not appear strange to you, to be told, that after all your good works, God will deal with you entirely as guilty sinners, void of all goodness, and have no regard at all to your supposed merit in the distribution of his mercy, but entirely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Are you not utter strangers to that exploit of faith which casts a poor guilty depraved soul, void of all goodness, upon the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, who justifies the ungodly? For this purpose the Son of God came into the world; and you do not give him a proper reception, but wickedly reject him as well as the Jews, unless you thus intrust yourselves to him.

The evidence grows upon me as I proceed; and I cannot but wonder you do not perceive it yourselves. Can any thing be more plain than that you make light of Christ! that you choose to have as little to do with him as possible! that you have no delight in his service! Does not your own consciences now tell you, there are this and that, and a thousand things, that you have more pleasure in! Do not your hearts fly off from him, whenever they are urged to approach him! When you are a little awakened with a sense of your guilt and danger, and ready with eager eyes to look about for a Saviour, alas! how naturally do you relapse into carelessness and security! How soon do you drop your purpose of seeking after him with unwearied endeavours, till you find him! how ready are you to take up with any thing in his stead! A little repentance and reformation are sub-

stituted in his place. You would rather get ease to your consciences from any quarter than from him. Like Judas, you sell him for a few pieces of silver; that is, you would rather part with him than give up your over-eager pursuit of earthly things.

A thousand such facts might be easily produced, which sadly prove that the blessed Jesus does not meet with that reception from multitudes among us which his character demands. Indeed their not being easily convicted of sin is an evidence they are guilty; for if they had a real regard for him, they would be concerned to inquire how the case stands, or how their hearts are disposed towards him. And a little honest inquiry would soon lead them into the truth.

And now I have a few questions to propose to such of you as are guilty of neglecting the Son of God, or have never given him that reception that might justly be expected of you; questions of the utmost importance, which I beg you would put home to your own hearts.

The first is, do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus, you contract the most aggravated guilt? It is the Son of God, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, that you neglect. And must not the Father resent it? Do you not touch his honour in a very tender point? and will he not muster up all the forces of omnipotence to avenge the affront! Since you neglect him, whom the Father loves; him, whom all the heavenly armies adore; him, whom all good men upon earth treat with the highest honour; since you neglect a person of infinite glory and dignity, your rightful Sovereign and only Saviour, how deep is your guilt! what a horrid exploit of wickedness this! neither heathens nor devils can sin up to such a pitch: devils cannot, because no Saviour was ever provided for them, or offered to them; and heathens cannot, because a Saviour was never revealed to them. You stand without a rival by your horrid pre-eminence in guilt. To you may be applied the words of Jesus, as well as to the unbelieving Jews: *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they would not have had sin;* that is, they would not have had sin of so aggravated a nature; *but now they have no cloak for their sin*, John xv. 22. they are utterly inexcusable; *for they have both seen and hated me and my Father.* John xv. 24.

The next question I would ask you is, must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt? To be punished not only for sins against the law of

nature, but against revelation, against the gospel of grace, against the love of a crucified Saviour—how dreadful must this be! *He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy*, says St. Paul: *of how much sorer punishment* (sorer than dying without mercy! O terrible!) *suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.* Heb. x. 29. You may make light of this now, but O! it will not prove light in the issue. Here let me mention a most alarming consideration: The love that God bears to his Son is the great source of all our hopes: it is because he loves him, that he accepts of his atonement for our sins; it is because he loves him, that he forgives and loves believing sinners for his sake; it is because he loves the head, that he shews such favour to the members; but as to such as neglect his Son, even the love which the Father has for him, becomes a source of peculiar terror, and prompts him to signal vengeance. "If he infinitely loves his Son, he must infinitely resent it to see him neglected and slighted by others. If he loves him he will avenge the affront offered him; and the more he loves him, the more severely he must resent and avenge it." How wretched then is their condition, upon whom even the love of God for his Son calls aloud for vengeance! and how signal will the punishment be, that the Father's love for his Son will inflict upon the despisers of him!

The third question I would propose to you is, How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus? Answer the apostle's question if you can: *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Heb. ii. 3. You cannot expect Jesus will be a Saviour while you treat him thus: and if he refuse, to whom will you turn?—What angel or saint can save whom he is determined to destroy? If he be against you, who can be for you? Remember the text—the Father sent his Son last into the world. He comes last, and therefore if you reject him, you need not look for another Saviour. You must take him or none: take him or perish forever.

I would further ask you, If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be ingulfed in everlasting destruction, does it become you to be so easy and careless, so gay and merry! If your bodies were sick, you would be pensive and sad, and use means for their recovery: if your estates were in danger, you would be anxious till they were secured: if you were condemned to die for a crime against civil government, you would be solicitous for a pardon. In short, it is

natural for man to be pensive, anxious, and sad, in circumstances of danger; and it is shocking to the common sense of mankind, to see one thoughtless and gay in such circumstances. Can you be easy under such a load of guilt? careless under a sentence of condemnation? and negligent, when the possibility of deliverance is set before you? I would not willingly see you sorrowful and dejected: but when your case calls for it, when your temporal sorrow may be medicinal, and save you from everlasting pain, when it is as necessary in your circumstances as sickness at the stomach in the operation of physic, then I cannot form a kinder wish for you, than that your hearts may be pierced and broken with penitential sorrows. You have, in your manner, commemorated the birth of a Saviour this Christmas;* that is, you have danced and caroused, and sinned to his honour. But now I come after, and demand in his name another kind of reception for him: I call you to the sorrowful work of repentance, for your ill treatment of him. Instead of such mirth and extravagance, would it not have been more proper for you to have listened to St. James's advice, *Be afflicted, and mourn and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;* that mighty hand which can crush ten thousand worlds, and which is lifted up against you to revenge the quarrel of his beloved Son. Can you return home this evening as thoughtless and merry as usual? Well, your career will soon be at an end: your vanity and trifling will soon be over. Perhaps, as Jeremiah denounced to the false prophet, *this year thou shalt die;* Jer. xxviii. 16. and O! that will ingulf you in everlasting sorrows.

Therefore what would you now think of making one honest trial, before it be too late, to obtain an interest in that Saviour whom you have hitherto neglected? O! will you not make trial, whether the disaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is, may yet be subdued by divine grace? whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers, will not have mercy upon you? whether the virtue of his blood is not still sufficient to cleanse you from all sin? O! will you give up the matter as desperate, before you make a thorough trial?

Your case is indeed very discouraging, but it is not yet hopeless; if I thought it was, I would not say one word to you about

* This Sermon is dated Jan. 16, 1758.

it, to torment you before the time. But I can assure you upon the best authority, of Jesus Christ himself, that if you now give him that reception which his character requires, he will receive you into favour as though you had never offended him, and make you forever happy. Therefore, come ye poor, guilty, perishing sinners, fly to the arms of his mercy, which are opened wide to embrace you. Cry for the attractive influences of his grace, which alone can enable you to come to him, and let there be joy in heaven this day over repenting sinners upon earth !

Sermon 40.

THE DOOM OF THE INCORRIGIBLE SINNER.

PROVERBS XXIX. 1. *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

A Proverb is a system of wisdom in miniature : it is a pertinent, striking observation, expressed in a few words, that it may be the more easily remembered ; and often in metaphorical language, that it may be the more entertaining. A collection of proverbs has no connection, but consists of short, independent sentences, each of which makes full sense in itself ; and therefore, in explaining them, there is no need of explaining the context ; but we may select any particular sentence, and consider it separately by itself.

Such a collection of wise sayings is that book of the sacred scriptures, which we call the Proverbs of Solomon. Wise men in all ages, and in all languages, have often cast their observations into the concise significant forms of proverbs ; but the sages of antiquity, especially, were fond of this method of instruction, and left legacies of wisdom to posterity, wrapt up in a proverbial dress ; many of which, particularly of the Greek philosophers, are extant to this day. Solomon chose this method of recording and communicating his wise observations as most agreeable to the taste of the age in which he lived. The sacred memoirs of his life inform us, that *he spake three thousand proverbs.* 1 Kings iv. 32. Of these the most important and useful were selected probably by himself, and afterwards by the men of Hezekiah ;

that is, by persons appointed by Hezekiah to copy them off; and they are conveyed down to all ages in this cabinet of precious jewels, the Book of Proverbs.

Among the many significant and weighty sayings of this wisest of men, the solemn monitory proverb in my text deserves peculiar regard: *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**

The request of a friend, and my fears that this proverb may have a dreadful accomplishment upon some of my hearers, have induced me to make it the subject of your meditations for the present hour. And O! that the event may shew I was divinely directed in the choice!

This proverb may be accommodated to all the affairs of life. In whatever course a man blunders on, headstrong, and regardless of advice and admonition, whether in domestic affairs, in trade, in politics, in war, or whatever it be he pursues by wrong measures with incorrigible obstinacy, it will ruin him at last, as far as the matter is capable of working his ruin. To follow the conduct of our own folly, and refuse the advantage we might receive from the wisdom of others, discovers an uncreaturely pride and self-sufficiency; and the career of such a pursuit, whatever be the object, will always end in disappointment and confusion. In this extent perhaps, this adage was intended by Solomon, who was a good economist and politician, and well skilled in the affairs of common life, as well as those of religion.

But he undoubtedly intended it should be principally referred to matters of religion. It is especially in these matters it holds true in the highest sense; that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth* himself, *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

He that being often reproved—This is undoubtedly our character. We in this congregation have been often reproved, and that in various forms, and by various monitors. We have been reproved from heaven and earth, by God, men and our own consciences; and, I might add, by the irrational creation, and even by infernal spirits.

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* *He that being often reproved*—This in the original, is *a man of reproofs*; and it may either signify as our translators understand it, "a man often reproved;" or it may mean, "a man often reproving;" that is, a man that often reproves others, if he harden his own neck, while he pretends a great zeal to reduce others under the yoke of obedience, he shall suddenly be destroyed, &c. But the first sense appears more pertinent and natural, and therefore in that view I only consider it.

Men of various classes have reproved us. It is the happiness of several of us to live in families where we are often reproved and admonished with the tender, affecting address of a father and a master, who are deeply concerned that their children and domestics should be their companions in the heavenly road, and be effectually warned from the alluring paths of sin and ruin. And have not our affectionate mothers often become our monitors, and gently, yet powerfully reproved us, with that forcible eloquence which could only proceed from the heart of a woman and a mother ;—or if our parents have been cruelly déficient in this noblest office of love, has not God raised up unexpected reprovers for us, in a brother, a sister, or perhaps a poor despised slave ? And who can resist the force of an admonition from such an unexpected quarter ?—And have not some of us found an affectionate, faithful monitor in the conjugal state ; a husband or a wife, that has reproved the vices or the negligence and carelessness of the other party ; and, by striking example at the least, if not in more explicit language, given the alarm to greater diligence and concern in the affairs of religion and eternity ? Such are powerful, though modest and private assistants to the ministers of the gospel, and O ! that they had but more assistance from this quarter ! To encourage the few among you that improve the intimacy of this near relation for so important and benevolent a purpose, let me remind you of St. Paul's tender excitement to this duty, given one thousand seven hundred years ago : *What knowest thou, O wife ! Whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or how knowest thou, O husband ! Whether thou shalt save thy wife ?* 1 Cor. vii. 16. The tender names of husband and wife have so much force in them, as may irresistibly constrain us to perform all the kindest offices in our power to those who bear them. But O ! to save a husband ! to save a wife ! to save those dear creatures from everlasting misery ! how great, how important the kindness ! and by so much the more pleasing, by how much the dearer the persons are to whom it is shewn ! But to return—If we are not so happy as to be agreeably surrounded with such honest reprovers in our own houses ; yet, blessed be God, we live in a neighbourhood where we may meet with one of them here and there. Has not a pious friend or a neighbour dropt a word now and then in conversation which might have served, and perhaps was intended, as a serious admonition to you ? Alas ! have you

never had a friend in the world, who has sometimes taken occasion to talk solemnly and pungently with you about the neglected concerns of your souls ? or at least, has not his example been a striking lesson to you ? Alas ! is it possible one should live in this congregation, without enjoying the benefit of a reprover ? Sure there are still some among us to bear their testimony against sin, and espoused the deserted cause of religion. But if the friends of religion have been silent, (and indeed they are generally too modest in this respect) yet have you not sometimes received an accidental undesigned reproof even from the wicked ? just as Caiaphas once prophesied of the death of Christ, and its blessed consequences. Not to observe, that their eagerness and indefatigable industry in pursuing their pleasures, whether they place them in honour, riches, or sensuality, and in serving their guilty lusts, in spite of all restraints, may serve as a pungent reproof of your lukewarmness and carelessness in the pursuit of the pleasures of religion and immortality, so much more noble and interesting. But I say, to take no notice of this, have they not at times rebuked you in more direct terms ? Have they not twitted and reproached you to this purpose, " I thought you, that pretend to so much sanctity, would not dare to venture upon such a thing." Or, " see the saint, the communicant, the presbyterian drunk—see his fraud and villany—see him as vain and frolicksome as his neighbours ; sure, we that make no such profession, may take such liberties, since such saints do so."—Such reflections as these, my brethren, however sarcastical and malignant, blind and bitter, have all the keenness of the sharpest reproof. And O ! that none of us may ever give any occasion for them ! but if offences should come to occasion them, may our hearts always feel their force ! Thus may we derive good out of evil ; be warned from sin by sinners : and restrained in our career to ruin by those who are themselves rushing into it !—But though all around you, both saints and sinners, should refuse to be your monitors, how many solemn warnings and reproofs have you had from the pulpit ! You have heard many ministers of Christ, who have been your solemn admonishers in the dread name of their Master. And it is now eleven or twelve years since I have began to discharge the painful and unacceptably office of a reprover of sin and sinners among you.—And what kind and liberal assistance have I received in my office, from the other side of the vast ocean, in the many excellent books which Brit-

ish piety and charity have furnished us with ! Our friends, whose voice cannot reach you, have sent over reprovers into your houses ; reprovers that speak particularly to the poor, especially to the neglected slaves. In short, I know no spot of America so happy in this important respect, as Hanover.

Thus have you been reproved by men from all quarters. And certainly so loud, so general, so repeated an admonition, even from men, must have great weight. But who can resist an admonition from heaven ! Surely, if Jehovah, the great Sovereign of the universe, condescends to be your reprover, you must immediately take the reproof, and set about a reformation. Well, this office he has condescended to sustain. He has himself become your monitor : and that in various ways, both mediately and immediately : mediately by his word and providence ; and immediately, by his blessed Spirit, whose office it is to *reprove the world of sin.* John xvi. 9.

The word of God has reproved you ; has honestly laid before you the destructive consequences of sin, and denounced the divine displeasure against you on its account. All its commands, prohibitions, and dissuasives of various forms, are so many friendly warnings and admonitions to you. He conveys his reproofs through your eyes and ears, when you read and hear his word ; and sometimes I doubt not, he has made the hardest heart among you feel his rebukes, and tremble under them. In short, you must own yourselves, that if any of you go on obstinately in sin, and perish, it will not be because the word of God did not act a faithful part towards you, but because you presumptuously disregard its most solemn and affectionate warnings.

Again : God has often reproved you by his providence. His providence has kindly chastised you with personal and relative afflictions ; with sickness and pains, bereavements, losses, and disappointments. Providence has admonished you with the striking voice of sick beds, dying groans, ghastly corpses, and gaping graves in your families or neighbourhoods, or perhaps in both. How many among us, in a few years have been brought down to the gates of the grave, that they might enter into a serious conference with death and eternity, which they were so averse to in the giddy, unthinking hours of health and hurry of business ! And what narrow escapes, what signal unexpected deliverances has Providence wrought for you in those seasons of danger and distress, that you might enjoy a longer space of repentance ! How

many of our friends and neighbours have sickened and died, for the admonition of survivers! Providence has pitched upon one here and there, that was wont to sit among us in our religious assemblies, and made him an example and a warning to the rest. They are gone before, to shew us the way; and put us in mind that our turn also will soon come.* Sickness and death, expiring agonies, pale corpses,

> The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave,
> The deep damp vault, the darkness, and the worm—

These are very solemn monitors; and that heart is hard indeed, that does not feel their reproof.

The providence of God has also reproved us, in common with our countrymen, by the public calamities that have hovered over or fallen upon our land and nation; and particularly by the ravages and desolations of war. Providence has commissioned Indian savages and French papists to be our reprovers, and loudly admonished us with the horrid roar of cannons, the clangour of martial trumpets, and all the dread artillery of ruin and death. What ear among us has not heard, what heart has not trembled, at this terrible warning!

Thus, and in a thousand other ways, has Providence concurred with the word, and feelingly reproved us with its fatherly rod.

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* Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
To damp our brain less ardours, and abate
That glare of life which often blinds the wise.
Our dying friends are pioneers, to smooth
Our rugged pass to death; to break those bars
Of terror and abhorrence nature throws
Cross our obstructed way; and thus to make
Welcome as safe, our port from every storm.
Each friend by fate snatch'd from us, is a plume
Pluck'd from the wing of human vanity,
Which makes us stoop from our ærial heights,
And, dampt with omen of our own decease,
On drooping pinions of ambition lower'd,
Just skim earth's surface, ere we break it up,
O'er putrid pride to scratch a little dust,
And save the world a nuisance. Smitten friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love;
For us they languish, and for us they die:
And shall they languish, shall they die in vain?—
Shall we disdain their silent, soft address;
Their posthumous advice, and pious prayer?
Senseless as herds that graze their hollow'd graves,
Tread under foot their agonies and groans;
Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths? YOUNG.

And we should always remember, that the hand of Providence is the hand of God, whatever instruments he is pleased to use.

But has he not often laid aside all instruments, and reproved you more immediately by his Spirit? Has not his Spirit been long and frequently striving with you; reproving you of sin; alarming you with apprehensions of your danger: exciting in you good resolutions, and serious thoughts of reformation? Has not the blessed Spirit at times borne home the word upon your hearts with unusual power, and roused your conscience to fall upon you with terrible, though friendly violence?—Which leads me to add,

You have been your own monitors; I mean your consciences have often admonished and warned you; have whispered in your breasts, that "this course of vice and irreligion will not do: this carelessness and indifferency in the concerns of your souls, this stupid neglect of God and eternal things, will not end well." Conscience has often honestly pronounced your doom: "Thou art a guilty, wicked creature, under the displeasure of God. Thou art destitute of true vital religion, and hast no title to the divine favour. If thou die in this condition, thou wilt be undone forever." Thus has conscience warned you; and you have, no doubt, some times sweated and agonized under its chastisements. Though you have preposterously laboured to bribe it, or suppress it by violence; yet it has still borne at least a faint testimony for its Master, and against you. Thus you always carry a reprover in your own bosoms wherever you go: and though every mouth around you should be silent, this will speak, if you do but attend, and give it fair play.

I may add, that even the irrational creation is your monitor; and in silent, but forcible language, remonstrates against your conduct. Can you hear the musicians of the air in every bush warbling out grateful anthems to their Maker, without being convicted of your guilty silence in his praise? Can you see the sun invariably rolling in the path first marked out for him by his Maker and Lord, without feeling yourselves reproved for your numberless deviations from the path of duty? Do not the regulated, stated revolutions of the seasons, and of night and day, sensibly reprove your neglect of the returns of your hours of devotion? In short, does not all nature cry out against you? Is not every thing you see obedient to its Maker's laws, but man? Man, who

should claim the precedence in obedience, as he is appointed lord of the lower creation.*

Nay, even infernal spirits, those everlasting enemies of man and goodness, may serve as your reprovers. Can you think of their unwearied roaming over the earth, in quest of souls as their prey, and their industry and toil to do mischief, without blaming your own negligence to save your souls, and do good? And could you but hear the lost ghosts of your own race, who are now shut up in the infernal prison, bursting out into despairing cries, and bitterly accusing themselves for their presumption and security, their lazy delays, misimprovement of time, and neglect of the means of grace, while upon earth; how loud and striking a warning would this be to you, who are now walking in their steps!

Thus, my brethren, I have given you a brief list of your many monitors. And who can stand the united reproofs of such a multitude? Who dare set himself against the admonition of earth, heaven and hell; of God and all his creatures? Must you not all yield to the warning?

Solomon supposes, in my text, that a man may be often reproved, and yet *harden his neck*; that is, obstinately refuse submission and reformation. A stiff neck is a metaphor often used in scripture, to signify an unyielding incorrigible spirit, resolute in disobedience, in spite of all restraints; in spite of advice, dissuasives and reproofs. And to harden the neck, is to confirm one's self in disobedience, in opposition to admonition; or to refuse to reform, and strengthen one's self in the refusal, in spite of all the means of reformation. It is to cherish obstinacy,

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* How natural are these reflections of that great and good man, Doctor Watts!

With steady course thy shining sun
Keeps his appointed way;
And all the hours obedient run
The circle of the day.

But, ah! how wide my spirit flies,
And wanders from her God!
My soul forgets the heavenly prize,
And treads the downward road!

The raging fire and stormy sea
Perform thine awful will;
And every beast and every tree,
Thy great designs fulfil:

While my wild passions rage within,
Nor thy commands obey;
And flesh and sense, enslav'd to sin,
Draw my best thoughts away. LYRIC POEMS.

to despise reproof, and resolve to follow a headstrong impetuous self-will at all adventures.* The metaphor is taken from an unmanageable, sullen ox, that will not bend his neck to the yoke, nor kindly draw under it; but stiffens his neck, that it may not bear it; and hardens it, that it may not feel it: and the lash and the goad do not break his obstinate spirit, nor reduce him to willing subjection. Thus, nothing but a sullen and senseless beast can represent the stupid, unreasonable conduct of that man who hardens himself in sin, against the strongest dissuasives and reproofs from God and his creatures.

And is not this the character of some of you? I am very unwilling to presume such bad things of any of you; but I must at least put it to your consciences to determine, whether it be so or not? This you may know by this single inquiry, whether you have reformed of those things for which you have been reproved? or whether you still obstinately persist in them, in opposition to the most striking admonitions? The profane and profligate among you have often been reproved for your vices; your drunkenness, swearing, lying, contempt of sacred things, and other immoralities: but do you not still obstinately persist in the practice of them? You have often been reproved for the neglect of the worship of God in your families, and the souls of your domestics; what warm remonstrances have you heard upon this head! And yet, have you not prayerless families, prayerless mornings and evenings still? Have you not been solemnly warned of the danger of neglecting, or carelessly attending upon the means of grace? And yet you are negligent and careless still! Have you not been earnestly admonished for your presumption and security, your entertaining high hopes of future happiness, and that you are genuine christians, at random, without honest trial and repeated self-examination? And yet do not some of you still persist in this stupid, pernicious conduct? Alas! how ignorant of your own true character! How unwillingly are you dragged to the bar of conscience, there to be tried, and hear your sentence! How ready are you to flatter yourselves with pleasing expectations, though in reality contrary to the declarations of eternal truth! And how secure and

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* That this is the meaning of the metaphor, will appear from a particular survey of those passages of scripture, where it is used either in the original, or in our translation. Exod. xxxii. 5, 9. and xxxiii. 3. Deut. ix. 6. 13. and x. 16. and xxviii. 48. 2 Chron. xxx. 8. and xxxvi. 13. 2 Kings xvii. 14. Neh. ix. 16, 17, 29. Psalm lxxv. 5. Isa. xlviii. 4. Jer. vii. 26. and xvii. 23. and xix. 15. Acts vii. 51.

thoughtless are you about the great concerns of religion and eternity! how lukewarm and inactive in the duties you owe to God and man, and in your endeavours to work out your salvation! But have you not been solemnly warned of the pernicious consequences of this cause? How often have you been honestly told, that this is not the narrow and rugged road of virtue and religion that leads to heaven! How often have you been warned of the danger of mistaking external formalities for vital religion, and a mere profession of christianity for the heart-experience and constant practice of it! And yet do not some of you indulge this destructive mistake still? Have you not been often reproved for contenting yourselves with a dead, fruitless faith, an empty speculation, or historical belief; with transient unwilling fits of servile repentance, that produce no reformation; and the counterfeit appearances of other graces and virtues? I say, have you not often been reproved for contenting yourselves with these, instead of that lively, operative, heart-affecting faith, that kindly, ingenuous, voluntary repentance, and thorough reformation, and those other active, practical graces and virtues, which are required in the gospel, as essential constituents of a true christian, and absolutely necessary pre-requisites to everlasting life? And yet you wilfully indulge the delusion still, and are unwilling to admit conviction, and discover the truth! How often and how solemnly have you been reproved for your excessive eagerness and avarice in the pursuit of this vain world, and your stupid neglect to lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, and to be rich towards God! And yet, is not this enchanting world your favourite, and the idol of your hearts still? And are you not still careless what will become of you through an everlasting duration, in an infinitely more important world? That one expostulation from Christ himself might have been an irresistible rebuke to you, *What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* But, alas! have you not stood out against this, and a thousand other pungent admonitions? Have you not often had the dreadful guilt and danger of making light of Christ and his precious gospel, of delaying your conversion to some uncertain hereafter, and of presuming upon the mercy and patience of God, exposed to your view in a striking light? And yet you have still persisted in the practice, in spite of reproof and conviction. I might easily multiply instances

on this head ; but these must serve as specimens at present ; and I shall only add this general rule for your farther conviction, that whatever sin you indulge yourselves in, whatever duty you omit, whatever grace or virtue you live destitute of, in opposition to the conviction of your own minds within, and of the reproofs and admonitions of God and man from without, you are then guilty of hardening your neck.

And if this be the case, how many of you are involved in this guilt? Lay your hand now upon your heart, and say, does not conscience whisper, or perhaps clamour, "Guilty! guilty!" It is strange, it is unaccountable, it is horrible, that there should be such a monster upon earth, on whom the repeated reproofs and warnings of God and his fellow creatures have been thrown away ; and who dares singly to stand it out against the whole universe! But, alas! are there not many such monsters among us? To reprove them again is a very unpromising and almost desperate attempt ; for they have been so inured to it, that they are hardened against it, and set it at defiance. Yet duty and compassion constrain us to make the attempt once more : for O! we cannot yet give them up as altogether desperate, nor resign them with willing hands as a tame prey to ruin. I know no other way to bring them out of danger but to make them sensible of it. And this I shall attempt, in illustrating the remaining part of the text, which informs you of the plain truth, that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed*, or broken, *and that without remedy ;* or, "and there is no cure."

The stiff neck that will not bend to the yoke of obedience, must be broken ; and its own stiffness renders it the more easily broken : for it is not easy to break what is yielding and pliable ; but even the resistance of the stiff neck occasions its own ruin. It may harden itself into insensibility under reproof : but O! it cannot harden itself into insensibility under divine judgments. It may refuse the easy and gentle yoke of the divine law ; but divine justice will forcibly impose its iron yoke upon it, and constrain it to bow till it be broken. This is the doom of the obstinate incorrigible sinner : thus shall he be destroyed and broken to pieces.

But this is not all : he shall suddenly be destroyed, suddenly broken. Sudden ruin is aggravated, because it strikes a man into a consternation, overtakes him unawares, surprises him at a disadvantage, when unprovided with any methods to escape ; and

also tears all his pleasing hopes from him : and by how much the higher the hopes from whence he falls, by so much the deeper he is ingulfed in misery.

Sudden ruin is the certain and natural consequence of a man's incorrigible obstinacy, in spite of admonition. He must be ruined because he will not be warned, nor forsake the path that leads to destruction. He will even take his own way at all adventures, and no man can help it : and therefore he must be destroyed. He must also be suddenly destroyed, because he would hope for safety in spite of warning ; suddenly broken because he would not foresee the blow. Till he feels the stroke, he would not believe it was coming ; and therefore his destruction is sudden, surprising, and confounding. This is the natural end of fool-hardiness and obstinacy, in spite of all restraints and admonitions : and there is no help for it : such obstinacy and presumption is an incurable disease, that excludes all remedy. This is implied in the last part of the text :

He *shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy ;* or, as it might be more literally rendered, " and there is no cure, or medicine, or healing." There can be no preventive medicine to such a self-willed, head-strong creature ; because he will not apply it ; and pushes off every friendly hand that would apply it. And there can be no healing or restorative medicine applied ; for the breach, when made, is desperate, and admits no cure. The stiff neck is broken in pieces, so that it never can be healed. Then the patient, so obstinate before, would most willingly apply a remedy : but O ! it is too late.

Reproofs and admonitions from God and men, and our own consciences, are the great means to recover sinners : and while these are ineffectual, no other can possibly have any effect. How can he be reclaimed from sin, who will sin in opposition to all restraints ! In opposition to the checks of conscience, and the strivings of the holy Spirit within, and the united dissuasives and rebukes of Providence, of the word of God, and of all his friends from without ! Neither God nor all his creatures can reform and save such a wretch, while he continues proof against all the means of reformation and salvation. It is unavoidable, that he should suddenly be destroyed ; and there is no help for it ; he must be given up as an incurable. The whole universe may look on, and pity him ; but, alas ! they cannot help him ; he has the instrument of self-murder in his own hand ; and he

will not part with it, but uses it against his own life, without control ; and none can take it out of his hand : that is, none can give his free will a new turn, but that God whom he is daily offending, and who is therefore not obliged to obtrude such a favour upon him.

This is the unavoidable doom of the man that being often reproved hardeneth his neck. And since this is the character of some of you, have you not reason to fear and forebode this tremendous doom ? Let me reason a little with you for your farther conviction.

Your danger will appear from these two considerations, that if you always continue in your present condition, proof against all admonition, you must be destroyed without remedy : and that there is dreadful reason to fear, you always will continue in your present condition.

That if you live and die in your present condition, you must be destroyed without remedy, is lamentably evident from what has been said.—It is the declaration of the wisest of men, inspired from heaven ; *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be* broken, *and* there is no *remedy*. It is one of the proverbs of this wisest of men. Now a proverb is a wise remark, made after long observation, and frequently exemplified in the world. Therefore when we consider Solomon here not only as speaking an inspired truth, but pronouncing a proverb, it is as if he had said, " This I have collected from long experience, and careful observation of mankind, and the course of Providence ; this is daily exemplified in the world without exception ; this all ages may regard as a sure and important truth, and I record it among my immortal proverbs for their warning, that *he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and* there is no *remedy*." A proverb being a familiar observation upon the common occurrences of the world, it follows farther, that the accomplishment of it is a common thing, that falls under every man's notice, to his full conviction ; and therefore Solomon, by inserting this remark among his Proverbs, intimates, that the sudden and remediless destruction of an incorrigible sinner, is a familiar event that falls under every man's notice, and which no man can dispute, without disputing the common sense and experience of mankind. Thus certain, irreprovable sinners ! thus common is your doom, if you continue in your present condition : it is certain, it is common, even to a proverb. And if

you still go on in your present course, you will at last become a hissing, a by-word, and a proverb to all the world.—Your destruction, as I observed, is unavoidable and remediless, according to the nature of things : it is the natural, spontaneous, and inseparable result and effect of incorrigible obstinacy. You resolutely set your free wills, which are not under the control of any creature but yourselves, upon your own ruin : and what then remains but that you must be ruined ! To ruin you must go, though attended with the prayers and tears of the saints, and checked by their friendly admonitions, enforced with those of God himself. They cannot help you against your wills. What can keep you from ingulfing yourselves in destruction, when you break through all restraints from God and the whole creation ? You reject the only means of cure : and must you not die as incurables ! If the Spirit of God strives with you in vain ; if conscience check and admonish you in vain ; if Providence uses its chastising rod in vain ; if sickness, and death, and graves preach in vain ; if Bibles and good books are put into your hands in vain ; if ministers, and friends, and neighbours, and the dearest relatives, advise, and persuade, and warn, and reprove in vain ; if heaven, and earth, and hell, if God and all his creatures admonish in vain ; what hopes can yourselves entertain of your salvation ! what better means can you desire ! what other means can you expect ! can you hope to be reformed and prepared for heaven, when these means, the best, the only means that ever were used with sinful creatures, and which have proved effectual in the most discouraging cases, have no effect upon you ! Judge yourselves, whether your destruction is not unavoidable in your present condition.

And that you will always continue in your present condition, is, alas ! but too probable. You have continued in it all your life past : and is not this a dreadful presumption that you will continue in it all your life to come ! Can you expect better means than you have had ? Or are your hearts become more soft and pliable now, when hardened by an obstinate course of incorrigible impenitence, that you should hope the same means will have greater efficacy upon them in time to come than formerly ? Are you as sure of twenty or thirty years before you, as that you have enjoyed twenty or thirty years in time past ! Is God the less provoked, by how much the longer you have offended him, so that you have more encouragement to expect the assistance of his grace hereafter than formerly ? Are you now any more out

of danger of being judicially hardened and given up of God, than ten years ago? And are you the more sure of his favour, by how much the more you deserve his wrath? Are the habits of sin grown weaker through inveteracy and long indulgence? Does the work of your salvation grow easier by delays, and by your having fewer days for work! Does conscience gain strength upon you, by your repeated violences; or the spirit of God work the more powerfully, the more you resist and grieve him! Does your being inured to the gospel, give it greater force upon you! If the happy change of your present condition be probable, the probability must depend, in human view, upon such absurdities as these. But can these be the foundation of probability? No; but of the greatest improbability. The truth of the case is, your condition is growing more and more discouraging every day; and you are approaching fast towards a fixed, unchangeable state of incorrigible obstinacy in wickedness. Ten years ago, it was much more likely, in human view, that you would have been converted ere now, than it now is, that you will be converted in ten years to come. In short, the only ground of hope concerning you, is not at all from the appearance of things in human view, but merely from the free and sovereign grace of God. I may say of your salvation, what Christ said of the salvation of the rich, *with men that is impossible:* that is, according to the ordinary way of judging among men, who can judge only by appearances, and who count those things likely or unlikely, possible or impossible, which seem to be so in their own nature: according to this rule of judging, there is no reason at all to hope for it: it is quite desperate. *But with God all things are possible:* he can and sometimes does act contrary to appearances and the natural tendency of things; and astonishes his creatures with unexpected and surprising wonders. Thus, veteran, obstinate sinners! he may yet deal with some of you. Omnipotence may yet take you in hand, disarm all your resistance, and cause you to feel those admonitions you have made light of. This, perhaps, God may do. But O! it is an anxious, dreadful peradventure; for you must know, though he sometimes singles out an hardened sinner of your class here and there, to make him the illustrious trophy of the power of his grace, yet this is not his usual way: he does not commonly work upon such rough, unsuitable materials. He generally pitches upon the young and pliable, upon those that have not been long inured to the gospel, nor

hardened in sin. Therefore, even this, which is your only ground of hope, can afford you but a trembling, anxious hope. Notwithstanding this, you have reason to fear that you will die as you have hitherto lived, hardy, resolute, incorrigible sinners. And if so, you know your dreadful end; you shall suddenly be destroyed; your stiff neck shall be unexpectedly broken; and there will be no help, no remedy.

And if you are indeed in so much danger, will you not now lay it to heart, and endeavour to escape while you may? Alas! shall this admonition also, this admonition for your disregarding all past admonitions, be lost upon you like the rest? O! will you not at length take warning, before it is too late! Perhaps the voice that now warns you, may not long sound in your ears. But O! let me find this day, that those whom I have reproved in vain for so many years, regard me at last, and submit and yield. Then, and not till then, you will be safe from the vengeance denounced in this alarming proverb, *He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

Sermon 41.

THE NATURE OF LOOKING TO CHRIST OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

ISAIAH XLV. 22.—*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.*

IT is the peculiar sin and unhappiness of the christianized world, that, while they profess and speculatively believe Jesus to be the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners; and while they harbour some kind of high esteem for him as a Benefactor that appeared upon earth about 1700 years ago, who should be still remembered with gratitude, yet that they are not deeply sensible of that intimate, personal concern which degenerate sinners have with him in every age. They do not make that eager, importunate, affectionate application to him, which his character requires as the Saviour of guilty men. Divine justice indeed was satisfied, the demands of the law were answered by the obedience and sufferings of our divine Redeemer long before we came into existence, and God became reconcileable to a guilty world. But all

this alone does not insure our salvation. Redemption must not only be purchased, but applied; and though it was purchased without our concurrence, yet all mankind, in all ages, are concerned in the application of it. There was no need of the gospel and its ordinances to procure it; but all these are necessary, and therefore appointed for our obtaining an actual interest in it. Hence Christ, as an almighty Saviour, is exhibited, and the blessings of his purchase are offered in the gospel; and all that hear the gracious proposal are invited to entertain this Saviour with suitable dispositions, and to consent to the terms on which these blessings are offered, upon the penalty of everlasting damnation. Our personal consent is required as much in this age as when the gospel was first published to the world; and it is this which is solicited by all the means of grace; it is to gain your consent to this gracious proposal, that the gospel is still continued among you. It is for this we preach; for this you should hear, and perform every other duty; for this the Lord's Supper in particular was instituted, and has been to-day administered among you. It is to melt your hearts, and engage your affections to a dying Saviour, that he is represented both in words and in speaking actions, in all the agonies of Gethsemane, and in all the tortures of Calvary.

But though these affecting means have been used from age to age, yet, alas! they have not had the intended effect upon multitudes. They act like a sick person infatuated with the imagination that the mere grateful remembrance of Galen or Hippocrates, or some other eminent physician of past ages, will be sufficient for his recovery, without following their prescriptions, or making a speedy application to a living physician now; whereas there is as much reason why we in this age should be pricked to the heart and cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* as there was for St. Peter's hearers. Acts ii. 37, 38. There is as much reason to exhort unregenerate sinners now to repent and be converted, as there was to exhort the impenitent Jews to it. There is as much cause to direct and persuade men now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the heathen jailer, who had been an infidel. Acts xvi. 31. It is true indeed, when we now exhort men to believe in Christ, we cannot include all the ideas in it which were included in this exhortation when addressed to infidel Jews and heathens in the apostolic age; for then it included, that they should renounce their former religion, and assent to this impor-

tant truth, that Jesus is the Messiah, and take upon them the profession of christianity; and this is rendered in general, I hope, needless in our land, as we have been initiated into this persuasion by our education and other means. But, my brethren, all this is far short of that consent which we must yield to the gospel, if we expect to be saved by it. This faith is not that living faith which we are called to act upon the Redeemer; and we must give him another kind of reception than multitudes do, who thus believe his divine mission, and profess his religion. We must have those affectionate dispositions and vigorous exercises of heart towards him, which become guilty, perishing sinners towards an almighty and gracious Saviour, who deserves and therefore demands our supreme affection, our humble dependence on his merits alone, and our hearty consent to be his servants forever. We must be brought to believe in him with such a faith as will regulate our practices, and render the whole of our life a series of grateful obedience to him, who is an atoning Priest upon a throne of royal authority, enacting laws and demanding the dutiful submission of his subjects. And therefore, though it is needless to call upon you to believe in the same sense in which this exhortation was addressed to infidels by the apostles; yet there is still room enough to urge you to this duty, only leaving out one ingredient then included, viz. a speculative belief and external profession of the christian religion, and that Christ is the Messiah. There is still reason to persuade sinners to consent to the terms of life established in the gospel, to renounce all dependence on their own righteousness, and to place their humble confidence in his alone, to acquiesce with the warmest complacence in the method of salvation through grace, and in the mean time to surrender themselves to his government, to obey his will, with the most cheerful willingness, the most ardent devotion, and the humblest adoration: in short, to entertain the great Redeemer with those affections and dispositions which the nature and design of his mediatorial office demand, and which become our condition as guilty, miserable, helpless creatures; all which are included in that faith in Jesus which the gospel enjoins as the grand condition of salvation.

This faith is one of the principal subjects of sacred scripture, and is expressed in various forms: sometimes in plain terms, but more frequently in metaphors borrowed from earthly things, and particularly from the actions of the body. This

method of expressing spiritual objects and intellectual ideas, in terms that originally and properly are applied to the body, is not only common in scripture, but intermingled in conversation, and authorized by the best authors in all ages and languages. We speak of the eye of the understanding as well as of our bodily eye: and to see an argument, or a meaning, is almost as common a phrase as to see a man or any other material object. The evidence by which the soul forms its determinations is called light, as well as the medium of proper vision. And as the metaphor is here borrowed from the eye, so it is frequently borrowed from the other organs of the body and their actions. This is owing to the penury of the language of mortals, who, as they are most conversant with material objects, and have the earliest and most frequent occasions of receiving or conveying their ideas of them in sound, are habituated to a dialect proper to these things; and, when they would express their ideas of immaterial things, they are obliged to transfer these terms, originally applied to material objects, to express those immaterial things; and there is not only necessity but reason for this, as there is a resemblance between those actions of the body from which these metaphors are borrowed, and those actions of the mind to which they are transferred; yea, it is not only a reasonable, but a beautiful and moving method of representing divine things: in this principally consists the beauty of poetry, that it clothes intellectual ideas in lively material images, which make deep impressions on our imaginations.

In such metaphorical terms, as I observed, faith is often represented in sacred scripture. Sometimes the metaphor is borrowed from the feet; and then to believe is to come to Christ; to come to him as one oppressed with a heavy burden to a person that can relieve, Matt. xi. 28. to come to him as one perishing with thirst to a fountain of living water, Isaiah lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17. or as the manslayer, closely pursued by the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge: hence it is expressed by the most emphatical phrase of *fleeing for refuge*. Heb. vi. 18. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the conduct of a dutiful and loyal people towards their rightful Sovereign upon his entering among them in his own territories. John i. 11, 12. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the ears; and faith is expressed by hearing his voice, as an impoverished dying wretch would hear the offer of plenty and

life. Isaiah lv. 3. John v. 25. And sometimes, as in the text, the metaphor is taken from the eyes; and faith is represented as looking to Christ. My present design is,

I. To explain the duty here expressed by the metaphor of looking.

II. To urge it upon you by sundry important considerations.

I. To explain the duty expressed by the metaphor of looking, we are to observe in general, that a man's looks often discover his condition and the frame of his mind. By virtue of the strange union between the soul and the body, the dispositions of the one are often indicated by the emotions and appearances of the other. The eye, in particular, is a mirror in which we may see the various passions of the mind; and it has a kind of silent, and yet significant language, which conveys to others those inward exercises which the tongue does not, and perhaps cannot express. Hence we can understand a look of surprise and consternation, a look of sorrow and compassion, a look of joy, the look of a perishing supplicant, or of a needy, expecting dependent. If an agonizing patient casts an eager look upon his physician, we understand it to be a silent petition for relief. When a dying husband fixes a wishful, tender look upon his surviving half, or those little other selves his children, they know the melting language, and feel its resistless energy. And when we see a drowning man casting a wild and eager look towards a boat coming to his relief, we understand it to be the language of earnest importunity for speedy help. Hence it follows, that "looking to Christ, implies those suitable dispositions and exercises of heart towards him, which are expressed by the earnest and significant looks of persons in a distressed condition towards their deliverer." And in such a case it is natural to conceive a person as expressing by his looks a particular notice and distinct knowledge of his deliverer, an importunate cry for his assistance—a wishful expectation of it—a dependence upon him for it—an universal submission to him—an hearty love and approbation of him—and joy and gratitude for his deliverance. And these dispositions and exercises of mind towards Christ are intended in the text by looking to him.

1. Looking to Christ, implies a particular notice and distinct knowledge of him. When we fix an earnest look upon an object, we take particular notice and a distinct survey of it, and so obtain a clear knowledge of it. Thus we are called to fix our intellectual eyes upon Christ, to make him the object of our contemplation,

and by these means to obtain the knowledge of him. Mankind are too commonly regardless and ignorant of him. And are not many of you chargeable with this criminal neglect? The blessed Jesus has exhibited himself to your observation in the gospel, but your attention is so engaged by other objects, that you will not allow him an earnest look. He has been set forth evidently crucified before your eyes, but you have, as it were, passed and repassed careless and unconcerned by his cross. You have had a variety of opportunities and means to be instructed in the glorious mysteries of the gospel; to know the person of the Redeemer as Immanuel, God and man; to know the absolute necessity, the gracious design, and the high degree of his sufferings; to know his sufficiency and willingness to pardon and save believing penitents; and, in a word, to obtain a competent acquaintance with the method of salvation. But you have taken but little or no notice of these things; and consequently remained contentedly ignorant of them. It is equally lamentable and astonishing, that in a land like this, abounding in Bibles and other means of instruction, christianity should be so little known even by those that profess it. How ridiculous a figure would an artist make that knew nothing of his trade! a school-master that could not spell! Or a doctor that knew nothing of physic! And yet men have the impious impudence to call themselves christians, and resent it when their profession is pronounced an hypocritical pretence, though they are ignorant of the rudiments of christianity. You are therefore called in the text to pursue the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, John xvii. 3. to make this the object of your study; for without it you cannot be saved. It is by the knowledge of him you are justified, Isa. liii. 11.; and if you are *a people of no understanding, he that formed you will not have mercy on you*, Isa. xxvii. 11, but you shall be destroyed through lack of knowledge. Hosea iv. 6. Not that a mere speculative knowledge of Christ will suffice; no, it must not be a look of curiosity and speculation, but you must be affected with the object; your eye must affect your heart; and by beholding the glory of the Lord in the glass of the gospel, you must be changed into the same image, or conformed to him in holiness. 2 Cor. iii. 18. A perishing man is not a mere curious spectator of his deliverer; but he views him with the tenderest passions. So you must look upon Christ. Thus the knowledge of him was attended with

supreme affection to him in St. Paul. Phil. iii. 7, 8. But this will be farther illustrated under the following particulars.

2. Looking to Christ, implies an importunate eagerness for relief from him. See Psalm xxv. 15. If your child were fallen into the hand of a murderer just ready to dispatch him, and should cast a wishful look upon you, while you was running to his deliverance, you would understand it as a silent cry for help. So we are enjoined to look to Christ with the most eager importunity for deliverance from him as our Saviour. And this supposes a deep sense of our need of him. When a guilty creature, that had been involved in the general presumptuous security, is effectually alarmed with just apprehensions of his danger; when he sees his numberless transgressions in all their horrid aggravations, and the dreadful threatenings of the law in full force, and ready to be executed against him: in short, when he sees himself ripe for ruin, and ready every moment to sink into it, with what importunate cries will he betake himself to him for relief! Behold, he prayeth! now he is often on his knees before God in secret, as well as in social prayer; and in the intervals between his prayers, he is often looking to the hills from whence cometh his aid, Psa. cxxi. 1. and wafting up many an importunate cry to heaven. Sometimes he sinks into an abyss of sorrow, and is overwhelmed with boisterous waves of fears, so that, with Jonah, he is ready to cry out, *I am cast out of thy sight, O Lord;* yet, with him he says, *I will look again towards thy holy temple.* Jonah ii. 4. Happy the souls that are thus looking to Jesus, who is lifted up for the recovery of a dying world, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness! John iii. 14. And happy we, should this spirit of pious importunity prevail among us, and banish that spirit of deep sleep which seems poured out upon us! Then would prayer be our employ, not only when we observed the returns of stated prayer in secret, in our families, and in our public assemblies, but our souls would be always in a supplicating posture; every wish, every groan would be a cry for mercy: and then might we expect to obtain the blessings we need; and the aspect of our religious affairs would be happily altered among us. To this duty the text invites us; and O that we may consult our own interest, as well as regard the authority of God, so far *as to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near!* Isa. lv. 6.

3. Looking to Christ implies a wishful expectation of deliverance from him. See Psalm lxix. 3. It may be illustrated by the history of the lame beggar, in Acts iii. 4, 5. He begged an alms of the apostles Peter and John: they do not immediately relieve him, but give him some ground of encouraging expectation by taking particular notice of him, and telling him to fix his eyes upon them. Thereupon the anxious cripple gives heed to them, and wishfully looks upon them, expecting to receive something of them. So a poor sinner, amidst all his anxious fears and despondencies, approaches the throne of grace, and begs for mercy. The Lord Jesus, though his bowels are yearning over him, does not give him immediate relief; he puts him off for a while, as he did the Syrophœnician, that he may give occasion for him to plead with the more importunity, and more suitably prize the blessing when obtained. Yet, in this melancholy interval, he does not leave him quite hopeless. The invitations of the gospel cry, "Look on me;" and the poor sinner lifts up the eyes of wishful expectation to receive something. "Who knows, but that soyereign and unbounded grace, which has relieved thousands, may also listen to my cries? Blessed Jesus! may I not indulge some trembling hope that thou wilt at length grant me deliverance? Thy free, thine indefinite invitations and absolute promises give me some ground of pleasing expectation; and O! shall it be frustrated? No, let me trust in thee for the gracious accomplishment." Such are the soliloquies of such an anxious soul. And though we might be all left in remediless despair, yet, blessed be God, we have encouragement to look to Jesus with humble joyful hope; and it is to this the text exhorts us.

4. Looking to Jesus, implies an humble dependence upon him for salvation. This supposes that we are deeply sensible of our own utter inability to relieve ourselves; and when we are convinced of this, we shall immediately look to another: when we see no ground at all for self-confidence, we shall place our trust in Jesus alone. It was such a look as this that good Jehoshaphat raised to heaven: *We have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.* 2 Chron. xx. 12. So Micah, finding no room for human confidence, resolves, *Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* Micah vii. 7. Thus an humble sinner, sensible of his utter inability, resolves to venture upon Christ, *to trust in him, though he should slay him.*

Job xiii. 15. And in those happy moments when the sinner has some glimmering hopes of acceptance, with what pleasure and satisfaction does he rest upon this eternal rock! and how happy we, should we be engaged this day to place our humble dependence there! It is to this the text calls us.

5. Looking to Christ, means an universal, cheerful submission to his authority. We must consent to be his servants forever, and wait all the intimations of his will to obey them. We must look and observe the motion of his hand pointing out to us the way of duty. We must look as a servant upon his master, eager to receive his orders. So the phrase seems used in Psalm cxxiii. 1, 2. *Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord.* Thus, whoever trusts in Jesus with a saving faith, surrenders himself to an unlimited obedience to all his commandments; and to this the text invites us.

6. Looking to Christ, implies a hearty approbation of him as a Saviour, and supreme affection to him. Love is often expressed by looks; and when we look affectionately upon an object, it evidences that we are pleased with the survey. So a perishing world is commanded to acquiesce in the method of salvation through Christ, to love him above all, and to take the fullest and noblest complacence in him: and upon their so doing, they are assured of salvation. We have indeed been influenced by education and the like means to entertain a general good esteem of Christ; but, alas! this is very far short of that endearing affection and hearty complacence which he claims and deserves. Our hearts must be engaged to him; he must be the chief among ten thousand in our eyes. Our thoughts and passions must often ascend to him, and we must rest in him with complacence, as containing all our salvation and all our desire. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

7. And lastly, Looking to Christ, implies joy and gratitude for his delivering goodness. The passions of joy and gratitude are easily discovered by the looks; and therefore are intended by this phrase, *look unto me*. And this is not only the duty, but the delightful inclination of one that has been relieved by him from the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the dreadful displeasure of God. Joy is in itself a pleasing passion, and we delight to indulge it: and to a heart that has just felt the mercy of deliverance from everlasting destruction, thanksgiving is a most grateful and pleas-

ing employ ; and, in this, much of the happiness of heaven consists.

From this view of the duty intended by looking to Jesus, take occasion, my brethren, to examine, whether ever you have complied with it ; for it is a matter of infinite importance, as your eternal state depends upon it. *He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life,* 1 John v. 12.

Sermon 42.

ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE OUR LOOKING TO CHRIST.

Isaiah xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else.*

THE duty of looking to Christ, being explained, I shall,

II. Urge you to look to him by several weighty considerations.

This is the great duty of saints and sinners, and consequently of every one in all ages and places, even to *the ends of the earth.*— It is the duty of sinners to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them upon this attractive, but, alas ! neglected Saviour ; to turn their attention from the trifles of time to the great Antitype of the brazen serpent, who is lifted up that a dying world may open their eyes just closing in death, and look and live. And saints, whose eyes have been turned to this glorious object, ought to fix them more intensely upon him, to take larger surveys of his glory, and to renew their affectionate trust in him.

I would premise, that when I exhort sinners to look to Jesus, I would not intimate, that they are able to do this of themselves. No ; I am very sensible, that all the exhortations, persuasions, invitations, and expostulations that a feeble mortal, or even the most powerful angel in heaven can use with them will have no effect, but vanish into air, without the efficacious operation of almighty grace. And yet such exhortations are neither useless, improper, or unscriptural : they tend to convince sinners of their inability to believe, which is necessary to their believing aright ; and it is while such arguments are addressed to their understandings, that the holy Spirit is wont to work upon their hearts. Hence they are so often commanded in scripture *to repent, to believe in Christ, to look to him to make them a new heart,*

&c. I would add, that when I express the duty enjoined under the metaphor of looking, I hope it will not lead any of you into gross corporeal ideas, since the import of it has been so fully shewn.

The arguments to enforce this important evangelical duty can never be exhausted ; and therefore I must confine myself to those which this copious text furnishes us with, which, when resolved into particulars, will stand thus :

It is salvation we are called upon to pursue—It may be obtained upon the easiest terms, without any personal merit, viz. by a look—It is Immanuel, the incarnate God, that commands and invites us to look—and he is the glorious and affecting object to which we are to look—and our looking shall not be in vain, for he is God, who engages to save those that look to him ;—and it is in vain to look elsewhere for salvation, and needless to fear his grace should be controlled by another ; for as he is God, so there is none else—and we in particular are invited, being especially meant by *the ends of the earth.*

1. It is salvation that is here offered. Look, and be saved. Salvation ! O most propitious, transporting sound ? Amazing ! that ever it should be heard by our guilty ears ! Sin, my brethren, has exposed us to the curse of the divine law, to the loss of heaven, and all its joys, yea, and of earth too, and all its entertainments ; for death, the consequence of sin, will rend us from them. We have no title to any good to satisfy our eager pantings ; and must languish and pine through an endless duration without a drop of bliss, if punished according to our demerit. We are also subject to the torturing agonies of a remorseful conscience, to be cut off from the earth by the sword of justice, and swept away by the besom of destruction into the regions of horror and despair, there to consume away a long, long eternity in inextinguishable flames, in remediless, intolerable torments, in the horrid society of devils and damned ghosts, who shall mutually promote and join in the general roar of torture and desperation. This, Sirs, is our just, our unavoidable doom, unless we obtain an interest in the salvation of the Lord. But salvation brings us a complete remedy, equal to our misery. It contains a title to the divine favour, and consequently to all the joys of heaven ; it contains a perfect deliverance from all the torments of hell : and shall we not then regard and obey the voice that cries, *Look unto me, and be ye saved !* Is it not fit

those should perish without remedy who hear the offer of such a salvation with indifference? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* Were we now under a sentence of condemnation to death by an earthly court, and were going out one after another to the place of execution, and should some welcome messenger with a general pardon in his hand come with joyful speed into this assembly, and proclaim, salvation! salvation! to all that would accept it on the easiest terms, what a shout of general joy would burst from this assembly! What changed faces, what tears of general joy, would appear among us! In this agreeable character, my brethren, I have the honour and the happiness of appearing among you this day. I proclaim salvation from the Lord to dying men; salvation to all that will look to him for it. And I would not make the offer to the air, or to the walls of this house, but to rational creatures, capable of consenting and refusing. I therefore request you to look upon it as a proposal made to you; to you men, to you women, to you youth and children, to you negroes, demanding a speedy answer. Will you look to Jesus? or will you hide your faces from him? Will you not think him and his salvation worth a look? Which leads me to observe,

2. This salvation may be obtained upon low terms. It may be obtained by a look. Look and be saved: and this metaphor implies that no merit is required in us to procure this salvation. It is as cheap a cure as that which the Israelites obtained by looking to the brazen serpent. The salvation is wrought already; Christ would not separate his soul and body, and put an end to his pains, till he could say, *it is finished*, and all required of us is a cheerful acceptance: and what terms can be easier? It is true we are required to abstain from sin, and be holy, in order to enjoy this salvation; but can this be looked upon as a hard term? It is impossible in the nature of things you should be saved in a course of sin; for one great part of the salvation consists in deliverance from sin. This is the deadly disease which must be healed, in order to your happiness. And how then can you expect to be saved while you indulge it? Would you not think your physician made easy prescriptions to you, if he assured you of recovery, when you were sick, upon condition that you would abstain from poison, and confine yourselves to a wholesome diet? Holiness is as necessary to happiness as temperance to

health ; and though sinners, like drunkards, think this a hard imposition, yet it cannot be altered, without a change in the immutable Deity. Therefore submit to the terms of salvation ; they are as low, as easy as the nature of things will permit. They are not the rigid arbitrary impositions of an austere being, but the mild, unavoidable requisitions of an indulgent and wise God, acting according to the reason of things. If salvation was offered to you, upon condition of your making an infinite satisfaction for sin, you might start off from the proposal ; for even almighty grace could not enable you to do this : for this you could not do without being advanced above the rank of creatures, and endowed with infinity, which you are physically incapable of. But grace can dispose you to consent to the terms of the gospel ; grace can turn your eyes to look to Jesus, for you are only morally incapable of this ; that is, you are unwilling, you are sinfully averse to it. Come then, look and live. The lowness of the terms aggravates the guilt of a non-compliance with them. What do those deserve who do not think of a salvation purchased with the blood of God worth a look ? What drudgery do you endure, what hardships do you voluntarily undergo, to procure some of the specious toys of this world ? What a difficult regimen will you submit to, what nauseous potions will you take, for the recovery of the health of your mortal bodies ? And will you not take the trouble of a look for the salvation of your immortal souls ? How eagerly will you accept the offer of any temporal advantage ! and will you neglect this invitation to look and live ? Especially, when,

3. It is Immanuel, our incarnate God, that invites and commands you to look to him, and be saved. You may trifle with the commands of an usurper, and reject the treacherous invitations of an enemy ; but dare you trifle with the injunctions, dare you refuse the gracious invitations of our supreme King and heavenly friend ?—That it is Christ who here calls us to look to him, is evident from the application of this context to Christ by the apostle : *To this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* Rom. xiv. 9—11. Which words, according to the Hebrew, you find in the verse following my text. See also Phil. ii. 9—11. Moreover the characters here predicated concerning the Lord Jehovah, most properly be-

long to Christ, according to the dialect of the New Testament; *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Now we know that Christ is every where represented as our righteousness and strength, *In the Lord shall the seed of Israel be justified*, verse 24, 25, which is spoken most properly of Christ, through whom alone we can be justified. It is therefore the voice of our Immanuel that sounds so delightfully in our text. It is his voice which spoke this goodly universe into being out of its original nothing; which said, *Let there be light; and there was light;* and dare we disobey his voice by whom all things were created? Col. i. 16. He spoke us into being, and we obeyed; and shall we, when blest with existence, resist his almighty call? It is his voice whom angels obey; Gabriel, and all his flaming ministers, fly at the first hint of his sovereign pleasure. Nay, universal nature hears his awful mandate, and all her laws are observed, or cancelled according to his pleasure. Events natural and supernatural are equally easy to him. And is this the majestic voice which sinners hear sounding in the gospel, and yet disregard? Is this he whom they make so light of, as not to vouchsafe him a look? Amazing presumption! And further, It is his voice which shall pronounce the final sentence upon the assembled universe. He now sits exalted upon a throne of grace, scattering blessings among his subjects, and inviting a dying world to look to him and live; but ere long he will put on majesty and terror, and ascend the throne of judgment. From thence he will speak, and omnipotence will attend his word to execute it. From thence he will pronounce, *come, ye blessed*, on all that hear his call now; and neither earth nor hell can repeal the joyful sentence. And on those that will not now look to him, he will pronounce, *depart from me;* "away, away from my blissful presence, ye cursed creatures, never, never to see me more." And though they can now resist the voice of mercy, yet then they must obey the dreadful orders of justice, and shrink confounded from his face, and sink to hell. We, my brethren, must mingle in that vast assembly, and hear our doom from his lips; and can we, in the serious expectation of that day, refuse his call to look to him now? Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him; and how shall we stand the terror of his face, if we now treat him so contemptuously?— These considerations shew, that the call in my text is the command of authority, and therefore that our neglect of it is disloy-

alty and rebellion.—But O ! there is a more melting, a more endearing consideration still. It is the voice of our Beloved, it is the gracious invitation of love : it is his voice who heard the cry of our helpless misery ; who, though equal with God, and possessed of infinite, independent happiness, emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant. He often looked up to heaven with strong cryings and tears in the days of his flesh for us. For us he spoke many a gracious word, still upon record ; for us he wrought many a miracle ; for us he travelled many a fatiguing journey and endured hunger and thirst, and all the calamities of poverty. For us he was reproached, belied, persecuted ; and O ! for us he sweat and groaned in Gethsemane ; for us his back was furrowed with scourging, his face defiled with spitting, his head bruised with buffettings, and pierced with thorns. For us he was nailed to the cross ; for us he hung in ignominy and torture ; for us he shed his blood, he breathed out his life ; for us his side was pierced ; and for us the Lord of life lay in the dust of death. And O ! blessed Jesus ! after all this love, after all these sufferings, will not the sons of men afford thee one affectionate believing look, when thou exhibitest thyself in the gospel, crying with a loud and loving voice, " Behold me, behold me ; look unto me, and be ye saved ?" O Sirs, can you reject the invitation of such a Saviour ? are you capable of such horrid ingratitude ? He bespeaks your attention with dying groans ; his wounds preach from the cross and cry, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* There he was lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness ; that whosoever believeth in him, though in the agonies of death, should not perish, but have everlasting life ; and can we neglect the invitation of such a Saviour in such circumstances ? Shall a guilty world always find something else to look upon, so that they cannot spare a glance to the blessed Jesus ? With what pious horror must angels behold such a sight ! And may not the earth shudder to support such impious ingratitude !

4. It is Immanuel we are to look to. *Look unto me.* He that issues the command is the glorious and attractive object we are called to behold. The adorable glories of a God, and the milder beauties of a perfect man, meet in his person. His glories attract the admiring gaze of angels, and charm the attention of the happy immortals above. The survey of his perfections is the source of all their bliss, and will furnish all their powers with

extatic employ, through the revolutions of eternal ages. And will not worms look up from the dust to him? Shall every sordid trifle engage their intense contemplation, while they hide their faces from this glorious Immanuel, as though he had no form or comeliness? There is an infinite variety of objects within the compass of the creation which attract our attention. Our eyes are charmed with the splendour of the day, the midnight glories of the starry arch, the verdure of the spring, the majesty of mountains, the beauties of human faces; nay, there is not a trifling curiosity in nature but engages our observation. But all the glories of the universe are but the faint reflections of his; they are but obscure copies of his underived excellencies. And shall we be charmed with the transcript, and take no notice of the original? Does the contemplation of the works of nature afford such exquisite entertainment to philosophic minds, and shall not every mind be transported in the survey of Immanuel's uncreated glories?—But if all these considerations fail, sure the love of Christ must constrain you. He has exhibited himself to your view this day in a vesture dipt in blood. He has emblematically past before you crowned with thorns, and covered with blood; and as Pilate said to the Jews, to melt them in compassion, so say we to you, *Behold the man!* And will you turn away from him regardless, or view him with as much indifference as though he were a malefactor? What is this but to join the Jewish rabble, *away with him! away with him! crucify him! crucify him!* He has virtually said to you as to Thomas, *Look into my hands, and behold the print of the nails; and look into my side, and behold the stab of the spear, which opened a fountain of life for you.* And can you deny an affectionate look to such an object? He hangs conspicuous on the cross, his nerves racked, his bones disjointed, his heart melting like wax in the midst of his bowels, while streams of blood run down his sacred body; and it is in this posture we are to look upon him. In this posture, as it were, he issues forth his gracious invitation, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* And is there a mortal so hardy, so ungrateful, as to refuse an affectionate look to him in such circumstances? Shall he complain, with David, his type, *I looked for some to pity: but there was none.* Ps. lxix. 20. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; no man cared for my soul.* Ps. cxlii. 4. Blessed Jesus! shalt thou take up this complaint over creatures for

whom thou didst bleed and die! over creatures who owe all their hopes to thee! may not the whole creation be struck with consternation at the complaint! why are not the miraculous solemnities that attend thy death renewed? why do not the earth tremble, the rocks rend, the sun put on the livery of a mourner, to see a dying God and a careless world! the Creator, the Saviour of men, in agony, in blood; and his creatures, his ransomed, asleep, and not affording him so much as a look of love and compassion! Were ever such horrid incongruities pronounced at a breath, or united in one sentence!—But the cross is not the only place where we should look upon him. Lift up your eyes to seats above, there you may behold him who tasted of death, crowned with glory and honour. His head, that was once crowned with thorns, is now adorned with a crown of glory: his face that was once bruised with blows, and disgraced with spitting, shines brighter than the sun in his meridian glory: His hands, that were once nailed to the cross, now sway the sceptre of the universe: and his feet, that were cruelly pierced, now walk the crystal pavement of heaven. He that was insulted by Jews and Gentiles, he at whom they wagged their heads, is now adored by all the heavenly hosts, who congratulate his exaltation, and cry with united voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* Rev. v. 11, 12. This is the voice of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands in that world where Jesus is best known. And shall we break the harmony of the universal choir? Shall we not echo back their song, and reply, *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,* (which is more than he did for angels) *to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.* Rev. i. 5, 6. Shall we not look to him whose glory attracts the eyes of all the celestial armies, and congratulate his exaltation? We have cause indeed to rejoice in it; for O! he is exalted, that he may have mercy upon us, Isa. xxx. 18. he has ascended the throne, that he may thence scatter blessings on a guilty world beneath him. He retains his usual love, and the tenderest bowels of compassion towards the meanest of his people. He is now pleading their cause in the court of heaven, and preparing a place for them. From thence he exhibits himself to our intellectual view, and invites us to look to him. And can we slight such glory and

love united? Are our natures capable of such infernal gratitude? O let us look to him, especially since it shall not be in vain:

For, 5. He is able to save us upon our looking to him. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God.* This is annexed as the reason of the duty enjoined; and what can give us greater security of salvation upon our compliance? *If God be for us, who shall be against us? If God justify, who is he that condemneth?* It is his right to constitute the terms of salvation, and he has almighty power to save all that comply with them. It is that God, who threatens to punish sinners, that here promises to save them upon their looking to him. And what glorious encouragement, what strong consolation does this afford us! Is there a creature here so full of unbelieving despondency, as seriously to think that even Jehovah cannot save him? Surely no; therefore look and be saved, for it is God that undertakes to save you. And he can do exceeding abundantly more for you than you can ask or think. Your sins may be mighty, but not almighty: your guilt may be great, but the blood of God can expiate it: the obstructions in your way may be numerous and insuperable to you, but he can reduce a mountain into a plain before you. You are feeble helpless things, *but have you not heard, have you not known, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.* Isa. xl. 28—31.

6. Look to him; for as he is God, so there is *none else.* This implies that there is no other Saviour, and that this sole Saviour is uncontrollable, and therefore able to save.

It is only a God that is able to work our salvation. Men, angels, all creatures are unequal to the task. They cannot satisfy divine justice for our sin; they cannot subdue our corruptions, and sanctify our hearts; nor conduct us safe through all the dangers and temptations that surround us. We in particular are utterly incapable of these things. It is not in the power of our hand to relieve ourselves.* And if you will not look to Christ, to whom will you look? *Call now, if there be any that will answer*

* To attempt to save ourselves is to affect to be Gods, and to claim the peculiar work of omnipotence.

thee ; and to which of the saints, to which of the angels, wilt thou turn? You are shut up to the faith, my brethren ; you have no alternative but to look to Christ, or sink to hell. There is no salvation in any other. And will you rather be without a Saviour than look to him as such ? Why, what evil hath he done ? Why such strange aversion to your best Friend, who is able to save to the utmost ? And as none else can save, so

He is able to save, because beyond control. There is no God besides, to reverse his will ; but whom he blesses, is blessed indeed. *He is head over all things to his church.* He limits the power, controls the rage, and baffles all the politic schemes of the powers of hell ; and the hearts of men, of kings, are in his hand ; and he turns them whithersoever he pleases. None therefore shall pluck his sheep out of his hand ; but he will give unto them eternal life. Look then to him, poor trembling weaklings, that are daily putting your life in his hand, and often dismally forebode your own destruction, and the victo ry of your enemies. *Trust in the Lord, Jehovah ; for in his arm is everlasting strength.*

7. And lastly, look to him, for you are particularly invited, being especially meant by those in the ends of the earth. A promiscuous call may not be regarded so much as a particular invitation directed to us, as it were, by name. We dwell in a continent that may be called the ends of the earth with peculiar propriety ; and though America was unknown in Isaiah's time, and probably not in his thoughts when he uttered these words, yet no doubt that omniscient Spirit, who inspired his lips, had a reference to it. It is true the words may be taken figuratively, as referring to the Gentiles in general, who might be said to be in the ends of the earth with respect to the favourite land of Judea, which was situated near the middle of the then known world, on the borders of Asia, near where it joins with Europe and Africa. Those in the ends of the earth seem also to suggest to us the ideas of poor outcasts in a helpless condition, as the Gentiles then were, without the knowledge of God and the means of grace. And if we take the text in this sense, it still refers to us who are the posterity of heathens. But methinks there is a particular beauty and propriety in it taken literally ; " Look unto me, and be ye saved, ye that dwell in the remotest ends of the inhabited earth ; look unto me, ye Americans, ye Virginians." O what a joyful sound ! Not many years ago we or our near ancestors came from the old continent of Europe or its adjacent islands ;

and the Lord hath driven out the heathen from before us, and planted us in their stead. We left his church and the favourite lands where his gospel had shined for ages, and came among savages that never heard of the name of Jesus, but dwelt in darkness and the shadow of death. But lo! he sends his gracious invitation after us to the ends of the earth, *Look unto me, and be ye saved.* In the days of Isaiah God was mindful of America, he was mindful of Virginia, and treasured up a rich invitation, till it should be inhabited, and in need of it. And shall we not regard it? Shall we not regard his voice crying in this wilderness? Indeed if any other blessings were worthy to be compared with those of the gospel, I might observe that he has not been kind to us in this respect only. He has turned this wilderness into a fruitful field: the residence of savages and wild beasts into a mart of nations. *He hath blessed us also, so that we are multiplied greatly; and he suffereth not our cattle to decrease.* See Psalm cvii. 36—38. We may borrow the words of Moses, in Deut. xxxii. 10—14. But, alas! we have waxed fat, and kicked against God, like well-fed horses against their proprietor. We have turned his blessings into occasions of sinning. We have improved in guilt and impiety in proportion to our improvement in riches and the arts of life. And it is an instance of divine patience that may astonish even heaven itself, that so ungrateful a land has not been visited with some signal judgment. But our iniquities are not yet full, and we hope there are more than ten righteous persons among us, whose prayers stand in the gap, and prevent the irruption of vengeance. But perhaps our day is at hand, and then, though Noah, Daniel, and Job should stand before God, yet his heart will not be turned towards us. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise! is not he thy Father, that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?* Deut. xxxii. 6. But to abuse the gospel is the greatest of all crimes. It is this that ripens a people for ruin, and fills up the measure of their iniquity: God will easier bear with the abuse of any mercy than with the contempt of his Son. *Therefore look unto him, and be ye saved, O ye ends of the earth.*

Sermon 43.

THE VESSELS OF MERCY AND THE VESSELS OF WRATH DELINEATED.

ROM. IX. 22, 23.—*The vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and —the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.*

THE true notion of the present world is, that it is a state of preparation for another; and, therefore, such as we habitually are here, such shall we be forever. Mankind are now forming, like clay in the potter's hands, some for honour and some for dishonour; some for wrath and some for glory. And as the potter does not put his vessels to their respective uses until they are finished and prepared for them, so neither are men removed from the present state, and fixed in their respective residences in the eternal world, until they are prepared, finished, and completely fitted for them. The vessels of mercy are prepared before-hand for that glory with which they shall be filled. And, on the other hand, the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction, and fit for nothing else, before they are dashed to pieces by the iron rod of divine justice.

It is a criticism worthy to be mentioned, even in this solemn place, where I never choose to make a parade of useless learning, that the apostle uses a different form of expression, when speaking of these different sorts of persons. The preparation of the vessels of mercy for glory, he ascribes to God, as his work. Hence he uses an active verb, προητοίμασεν. referring expressly to God as the agent—*the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.* But the fitting or preparing the vessels of wrath for destruction, he does not ascribe to God, but intimates, that it is their own work. Hence he uses a passive particle—κατηρτισμένα, *the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*—fitted by their own wilful sin and impenitence, during the long-suffering of God towards them, which had a tendency to lead them to repentance.

Vessels of wrath—How terribly emphatical is this phrase! Vessels dreadfully capacious of divine wrath! to be filled to the brim with that burning liquid! But how beautifully significant is the metaphor—*vessels of mercy!* vessels formed, prepared, finished,

adorned by the gentle and skilful hand of divine mercy ! vessels capacious of mercy, and to be filled, to overflow, with glory !

The gracious and sovereign God, who might justly have dashed these vessels of wrath to pieces as soon as ever they became marred clay in his plastic hands, endures or bears with them with much long-suffering, as well as with the vessels of mercy : Bears with them, as he has with you, for days, for months, and years, notwithstanding their daring provocations, and ungrateful abuse of his patience ; which nothing but divine patience could bear with so long. But all this time, they contracted more and more filth and pollution ; they became every day less fit for their master's use, and rendered themselves more and more fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

And shall these vessels of wrath answer no valuable use in the great house of the universe ? Will they serve to furnish out no apartment of this vast building ? Will they be of no use in this numerous family of reasonable creatures ? Yes, they will furnish out the regions of hell, a place as necessary and useful in the universe, as it is now constituted, as prisons and bedlams upon the earth. They will serve as public and terribly illustrious monuments of the divine power and justice, and the righteous resentments of Heaven against sin. They will serve as loud warnings to all worlds, to deter them from that destructive evil. And thus they will answer a valuable, and even a benevolent end in the creation, and contribute to the public good ; as the execution of criminals tends to guard the laws from violation, and so promote the good of society. They will serve, as my text informs you, " to shew the wrath and make known the power" of God : Their destruction will illustriously display the glory of these perfections. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright, to reflect a terrible and yet amiable splendour upon them : And it is for this terrible but righteous end, among others, that God now endures them with so much long-suffering : that his perfections and the honour of his government may be the more illustriously displayed in the execution of deserved punishment upon them.

But the vessels of mercy are intended and prepared for nobler uses. On them God intends to display the glory, the riches of the glory of his more gentle attributes, his love and grace. With them he intends to furnish out the many mansions of his heavenly house. By them he intends to let all worlds see what glorious vessels he can form, not only of the dust, but of the shattered and

polluted fragments of human nature, broken and polluted by the fall of Adam, and by their own.

The view in which I now consider my text leads me to confine myself to this practical inquiry :—

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction, consist ?

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the text, were struck with horror, and ready to bless yourselves at the sound : For "now, you thought within yourselves, we shall have a sermon upon the horrible doctrine of predestination." But you see I propose to consider the text entirely in a practical view ; and therefore your fears are imaginary. Nor do I choose to consider it in this view, to let you see with what dexterity I can evade the genuine sense of it, and make a mental reservation of a doctrine so unpopular ; but because whatever else the text in its connection may mean, it does naturally lead me to this grand inquiry ; and because my present design is to speak to your hearts, about an affair which you are all concerned and capable to know, and not to perplex your minds with a controversy, of which not many of you are competent judges. I must own, indeed, I am not altogether a sceptic in that doctrine. It is not an entire blank in my creed ; nor am I at all ashamed to declare my sentiments in a proper time and place. At present I shall only tell you, that I cannot be persuaded God has made such a world as this, without first drawing the plan of it in his own omniscient mind. I cannot think he would produce such a numerous race of reasonable and immortal creatures, without first determining what to do with them. I cannot think the events of time, or the judicial process of the last day, will furnish him with any new intelligence to enable him to determine the final states of men more justly than he could from eternity.—But away with all controversial thoughts at present ; and let an object of more importance engross all your attention : For you will find, I am not now going to plunge and drown you in this unfathomable depth. This you may be sure of, that, if you have not made yourselves fit for destruction, and fit for nothing else, by your own wilful sin, you shall never be doomed to it by virtue of any decree of God. And, on the other hand, you may be equally sure, that he never decreed to admit you into heaven, unless you are prepared for it ; nor to exclude you if you are so. I now proceed to the grand inquiry.

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitness for destruction consist? This will naturally lead me to inquire into your habitual dispositions and behaviour: For it is by comparing these to the nature and quality of the regions of heaven and hell, that you can discover which you are fit for. If your temper and dispositions be heavenly and divine, you may be sure that you shall be admitted into those blessed mansions. But if, on the other hand, your temper and dispositions be infernal and diabolical; if they be such as are prevalent and universal in hell, you may be equally sure, that unless they are changed, you will be doomed forever to that dismal region. This must, methinks, appear quite evident to common sense. The righteous Judge of all the earth will always invariably do that which is fit. If you are fit for the enjoyments and services of heaven, you need not fear but he will admit you; never yet has such a soul been excluded. And what can you reasonably desire more? Would you have heaven encumbered with such as could not be happy, even in the very regions of happiness, for want of a proper relish for the enjoyments there? But, if you are fit only for the infernal prison, is there not a propriety, as well as justice, in your being confined there? The same propriety, as that madmen should be shut up in bedlam, or notorious criminals in a dungeon. Therefore,

1. Are you fit for heaven? do you love and delight in God—in a God of infinite purity? If not, the enjoyment of his presence, and the beatific vision of his face, which is the principal ingredient of heavenly happiness, could afford no happiness to you. Do you delight in the service of God, in contemplating his glories, in celebrating his praises, and in the humble forms of worship in his church on earth? Do these afford you the most exalted pleasure? If not, heaven is no place for you; for these are the eternal exercises there: And to such of you as have no pleasure in them, the heavenly state would be an eternal drudgery. Do you delight in holiness? If not, what would you do in the region of holiness? Alas! to you it would be an unnatural element. Are the saints, those whom the world perhaps calls so with a sneer, because they make it their great business to be holy in all manner of conversation, are these your favourite companions? Is their society peculiarly delightful to you? And are they the more agreeable to you, by how much the more holy they are? If not,

what would you do among the holy inhabitants of heaven? With what pleasure could you mingle in society with them, while your temper and theirs are so directly contrary? Are your hearts full of ardent love and benevolence to mankind? If not, how would you breathe in the pure element of perfect love?—Without such dispositions as these, you are no more fit for heaven than a sick man for a feast, a swine for a palace, or a blind man to view the splendours of the sun, and, therefore, you may be certain, that God, who will never do any thing that is unfit, will not admit you there, while you continue such as you now are.

You must also consider, that if you are fit for those pure and blessed regions, it is God that has made you so, by his own almighty power; *He that hath wrought you for this self-same thing is God*, 2 Cor. v. 5. and you have been deeply sensible that the work was indeed his, was divine and godlike, and beyond the utmost efforts of your degenerate nature. You are able indeed to fit yourselves for destruction; that you can easily do; and that, I am afraid, some of you have effectually done already. But it is God alone that can make you fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. And have you ever been the subjects of this divine operation? Have you ever felt the power of almighty grace opening your blinded minds—breaking your stony hearts, and melting them into floods of ingenuous sorrow, under the warm beams of a Saviour's love, like snow before the sun? Have you ever felt it subduing your favourite sins, and making them more bitter to you than death, and implanting and cherishing every grace and virtue in your souls? Has the Holy Spirit turned the prevailing bent of your souls towards holiness, so that you esteem it the principal ornament of your nature, and make it the object of your eager desires, and most vigorous pursuit? Does holiness appear to you amiable in itself, and not only a pre-requisite to your happiness, but the principal ingredient of it? And is heaven itself the more endeared to you by this consideration, that it is the region of pure, unmingled holiness, that no unclean thing can enter there, and that even the way that leads to it is holy? If these things are not matters of experience to you, you may be sure you are not *afore prepared for glory*.

Let us now take a view of the opposite dispositions, and we shall make the same discovery:—Suppose your hearts are set upon the enjoyments of this life, as your principal happiness; sup-

pose you are chiefly solicitous and laborious to heap up riches, or to indulge your sensual lusts and appetites ; supposing this to be the ruling passion of your souls, are you fit for heaven ? In heaven there are none of these low and sordid enjoyments : And what pleasure would you have there, who have a taste only for these things ? You are indeed fit to dig in the earth, like moles, and steal the serpent's food : You are fit to scrape up riches ; fit to wallow in the mire of guilty and debauched pleasures ; fit to live in this world could you always make your residence in it : This gross, impure, earthly element, suits your depraved constitutions. But can you once imagine you are fit for heaven ; fit to breathe in that pure salubrious air ; fit to share in those refined and spiritual enjoyments ; fit to join in the exalted employments of seraphs, while this is your prevailing temper ? Surely, no. And what then will become of you ? The impure and gross region of this world, so agreeable to you, will not always last, and you will not probably live in it as long as it does last ; but death, ere long, will tear you away from all that is dear to you under the sun. And, alas! whither then shall you go ? where then shall you take up your eternal residence ?—I leave you to pause and think upon it.

Suppose the service of God be a weariness to you, and the thoughts of Him unwelcome to your minds : suppose your hearts are full of angry malignant passions : in short, suppose you love sin more than holiness, can you flatter yourselves you are fit for heaven ? Alas ! it would be as unnatural an element to you as for a fish to live out of water, or you to live in it —But the farther illustration of this will fall under the next head ; therefore,

2. Inquire, Whether your temper and disposition be not infernal and diabolical, and such as render you fit for destruction, and for nothing else ? Are your hearts destitute of the love of God ? " No, you answer ; we thank God we have never been so bad as that comes to." But if you love God, whence is it that you have so few affectionate thoughts of Him ? that you do not study to please him in all things, and delight in his service ? If you love God, how comes it that you do not keep his commandments which is the grand decisive test of love ? Alas ! instead of loving him, are not your hearts disaffected to him ? As evidences, of this, may I not produce your dislike to serious thoughts of him, your aversion to his service, your disregard to his will as the rule of your conduct, and your headlong propensity to follow

your own pleasure ? Do not the murmurings and insurrections of your hearts against him and his dispensations, your uneasy rebellious spirit under his providences, your aversion to his service, do not these shew that you are really disaffected to him ? Now this is the very temper of hell ; this is the constituent of a devil ; the very worst ingredient in that infernal composition ; and therefore, unless this temper be changed, you must dwell with devils forever : It is fit all the enemies of God should be shut up together in one vast prison. It is unfit that rebels and traitors should always run at large, or mingle with loyal subjects. Alas ! Sirs, a soul without the love of God is devilized already, ripe for destruction, and fit for nothing else.

Again, Are there not some of you who have no pleasure in devotion, no delight in conversing with God in his ordinances ? The posture of humble worshippers at the throne of grace is not easy and agreeable to you ; and hence that you have prayerless families and prayerless closets ; and if you join in public worship once a week, it is a mere customary formality. You cannot bear to wean your thoughts and tongues from temporal affairs in the few hours devoted to the service of God, though they make up but one day in seven ; you do not delight in religious conversation, but it strikes you dumb, like the man without the wedding garment. Well, in the infernal regions you will have as little of this exercise as you could wish. The patient will then be hopeless and incurable, and therefore no farther means will be used with him. Then you will no more be troubled with prayers, bibles, sermons, religious conversation, or the tedious hours of the Lord's day. And, since you have no taste for such exercises, is it not fit you should be sent into those ungodly regions, where you shall never be employed in them ?

Again, Are not the minds of some of you defiled with all manner of sin and moral pollutions ? And do not these render you fit only for that region of corruption and impurity ? Do you not indulge an angry, contentious, unforgiving, malicious temper ? Well, that is the very temper of hell, and renders you fit for it. Nay, these outrageous passions, when broke loose from restraint, will create a hell in your own breasts, and not only expose you to punishment, according to justice, but become the ingredients of your punishment, according to the course of nature. Do not some of you indulge yourselves in backbiting, and all the base malignant arts of defamation, and perhaps are fire-

brands in the neighbourhood where you live? Well, in hell you shall have enough of this work; and, while you indulge this spirit, you are preparing yourselves for that land of universal hostility and revenge. Is not cursing and swearing the familiar language of some of you? Well, this is the language of hell; and you are now practising the infernal dialect, and preparing to converse with the ghosts below in their own style, in the region of imprecation and blasphemy. Do not some of you live in the practice of the works of the devil; that is, of those works to which he tempts you, and in which he has persisted, who was a sinner from the beginning? Are you not then fit for that everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Even the gentle lips of Jesus himself, would tell you, as he did the Jews, that *you are of your father the devil*, John viii. 44, since you habitually do his works. And is it not fit you should be doomed to the society of your infernal father?

Do you not find your hearts are habitually hard and insensible? Or if you have some kind of repentance, it is only a servile horror, extorted remorse, and involuntary pangs of desperate agony. This is the very kind of repentance in hell, where they still love sin, and yet cannot but upbraid and torment themselves, because they have ruined themselves by indulging it. Conscience tortures them with the keenest reflections; but they feel no kindly ingenuous relentings; no generous sorrows, proceeding from a sense of the intrinsic vileness and baseness of sin, and from a sincere disinterested love to God and holiness. Hence their repentance is only a punishment, but has no tendency to their reformation. And is not this the very nature of your repentance at present?

But I need not dwell long upon this inquiry. It is enough to tell you, in short, that if you are still in your natural state; if you still retain that temper which is natural to you as the degenerate sons of Adam, without any supernatural change; that estrangement from God; that disaffection to him; that carnality and earthly-mindedness; that blindness and insensibility about divine things; that presumption, security, and love of lawless pleasure: I say, if this be still your prevailing temper, you are not meet for the heavenly inheritance; for in order to be heirs of that, you must be born again of God. But you are fitted for destruction; for *by nature you are children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3.

and while you continue such, you must be *vessels of wrath.* Therefore bring the matter to a short issue, by this decisive inquiry : " Have I ever been born again ? Have I ever experienced such a mighty change in the temper of my mind, as may, with propriety, be called a *new birth*, or a *new creation ?* For *if any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. Have I thus been renewed in the spirit of my mind ? or am I still the same *old man*, with my old affections and lusts ? This my brethren is the grand decisive inquiry ; for if you have been begotten again, St. Peter tells you, it is to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away ; reserved in the heavens for you.* 1 Pet. i. 4. But Jesus, the friend of sinners ; Jesus, who never pronounced a harsh sentence, and who never will exclude from heaven one soul that is fit for it, nor doom to destruction one soul that is fit for any thing else : even Jesus himself has strongly assured you with his own gracious lips, that *except you be born again*, born of the spirit, as well as of water, *you cannot see the kingdom of heaven ; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, John iii. 3, 5, 6, carnal, corrupt, unholy, and utterly unfit for that spiritual, pure, and holy kingdom.

Here I would enlarge a little upon an observation, which I just hinted at before, namely, That these corrupt dispositions are not only criminal, and therefore will bring upon you the penalty of the divine law, according to justice, but that they are, in their own nature, destructive, and therefore, according to the course of nature, will be your ruin. Suppose God had made no positive constitution to exclude you from heaven ; yet while you have no relish for the employments and enjoyments of that state, it is impossible, in the nature of things, you should be happy there. As you must have animal senses, to render you capable of animal pleasures, so you must have spiritual senses to render you capable of the pure spiritual pleasures of paradise ; and without these you can no more be happy there than a stone can enjoy the pleasures of an animal, or a beast those of reason : You would be miserable wretches in paradise itself. Do but consider in what things the bliss of heaven consists, and methinks you will rather fear, than hope and desire admission there. Is religion so pleasing a thing to you, that you might expect you should be completely happy if it were but perfected in you ? Alas ! are there not a thousand things more agreeable to some of you ? But in heaven

there are none of these things, and how do you expect to be happy there? There must be another heaven created for you, a Mahometan paradise of sensual pleasures, or else your temper must be changed. The paradise of saints and angels does not suit your vitiated taste.

Farther, Suppose God should not inflict any positive punishment upon you with his own immediate hand, but only suffer the course of nature to run on, and let your corrupt dispositions have full scope and range without restraint, would not these dispositions alone create a hell within you? Anger, malice, envy, and every wicked and turbulent passion against God and his creatures, will break out into outrageous hurricanes, when the kind restraints under which they now lie are taken off, and they will agitate and distract your souls forever, and render you incapable of all peace, serenity and joy. Then also, all temporal enjoyments, the objects of your love and desire, and the only things you have now to allay your raging thirst for happiness, will be forever torn from you, and leave you to famish in a dismal void; and then you will pine away with eager, impatient, insatiable desires, which will gnaw your hearts, and prey upon your spirits like hungry vultures. Suppose you were now stript naked of every enjoyment, and nothing left you but bare being, with your usual capacity of enjoyment; suppose you were deprived of the light of the sun, the products of the earth, the comforts of society, and every imaginable blessing, and doomed to wander, forlorn and hungry, in some dismal desert, how consummately miserable would this privation alone render you! But this will be the doom of the ungodly, as soon as death breaks their connections with this world. They must leave all their enjoyments behind them, and yet carry their eager desires, their insatiable avarice of happiness, along with them; and these will make them capacious vessels of pain; for a capacity of enjoyment, not satisfied, is a dreadful capacity of positive misery. Thus, you see your destruction comes upon you according to the course of nature; and you will die eternally, though the hand of the executioner should never touch you, as the unavoidable result of your present temper, the deadly disease under which you labour.

And hence you may see, by the way, that it is no act of cruelty or injustice in the Supreme Judge, to shut you up in the prison of hell; for what else should he do with you, when you are fit for no other place? Is it cruel to exclude the sick from

entertainments, or persons infected with the plague from the society of the sound and healthy? Is it cruel to confine madmen in bedlam, or criminals in prison? Certainly no. Therefore God and his throne will be guiltless forever.

And now, my dear brethren, have any of you been convinced that this is really your case? That your temper and conduct is such as at once renders and proves you utterly unfit for heaven, and, as it were, naturalizes and seasons you for the infernal regions. Alas! this is a shocking and alarming discovery indeed: but, blessed be God, you have made it in time; you have made it while in the land of hope, and in a state of trial; and therefore there is reason to hope, that, if you now take the alarm, and earnestly use the means of grace, your condition, bad as it is, may be happily altered; and you, who are now fit for nothing but destruction, may yet be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is because there is some reason for this hope, that I have honestly exposed these alarming and unpopular things to your view. You must know them sooner or later: and if you should not know them until you fall into destruction, alas! it will then be too late. Believe me, my brethren, these things do not proceed from a morose malevolent heart, nor are they intended to drive you into despair. I speak to you with melting pity and affectionate benevolence; and instead of driving you into despair, my design is to save you from it forever, and bring you to have a good hope through grace. And as the evidence of what I have offered is so plain to common sense, do not pretend you cannot understand me, and do not know what I would aim at. I am only inculcating upon you this self-evident truth, that unless you are prepared for heaven, you shall not be admitted; and that, if you are fit for nothing but destruction, you must be destroyed. Can any mathematical demonstration be more plain than this? And are any of you so void of sense, reason and faith, as not to understand and believe it?

I now presume, that such of you as have made this discovery with regard to yourselves, are also convinced, that you cannot possibly escape destruction, unless your present temper be changed, and quite a new frame of spirit given you.

And who do you think, can work this happy change in your hearts! If you are so vain and ignorant, as to flatter yourselves that you can effect it in your own strength, make the trial, and you will soon be undeceived. It is God alone that can work in you

both to will and to do. My text tells you, it is He that prepares the vessels of mercy for glory: It is his Holy Spirit alone that is equal to the arduous work.

But in what way is this influence to be expected? Is it in a course of impenitent sinning? of presumption and security? of sloth and negligence? No; to expect it in that way, is to tempt the Lord your God. But such of you as would escape the damnation of hell; such of you as have any desire to be forever happy, hear me, seriously hear me, and I will tell you in a few plain words what you must do, if you would expect the aids of divine grace to prepare you for glory.

You must immediately think seriously of your condition: you must labour impartially to know the truth of your case: pry into the dreadful secrets of wickedness in your hearts: review your sinful lives: reflect upon the purity and justice of God and his law, and what you have deserved for a whole life of unnatural rebellion against him: read and hear the word of life with solemnity and attention, and use all proper means to furnish your minds with religious knowledge. It may pain you at first to confine your minds to such objects; but it must be done;—and there is no disputing against necessity: besides, the pain is medicinal; it will contribute to the recovery of your dying souls.

Again, You must accustom yourselves to frequent importunate prayer. If ever you be saved, or prepared for salvation, it will be in answer to prayer: therefore engage in it, persevere in it, and never give over until you obtain your request.

Further, You must guard against every thing that tends to divert your minds from this grand concern; as excessive hurries and cares about earthly things, vain and vicious company, and every avoidable temptation.

Finally, You must persevere in this course, if you hope to succeed; and never rest until you feel the dispositions of heaven wrought in your souls. A pang of remorse, a serious fit, a transient prayer, will not suffice, but you must hold on your way to the last. You may expect difficulties in this new course, and you will probably meet with more than you can now foresee or expect. But you must break through all; for your immortal interest, your all is at stake.

This is the course I would advise you to, if ever you hope to be prepared for glory. I cannot give you any the least encouragement in any other way. If any other can shew you a more easy,

and yet safe course, and produce sufficient authority for it, you may take it: but, for my part, if I teach you what I learn in my bible, I can give you no other directions; nor do I expect to be saved in any easier way myself. And therefore, if you will choose another, you must be answerable for it. Remember I warn you against it, and would not be accessary to it for ten thousand worlds.

Now, if this course must be taken, I ask when, do you think, must it be begun? Will you appoint tomorrow, or next year, or old age, or a sick bed, for that purpose? Alas! you may never live to see that time. Before then you may drop into destruction, as rotten fruit fall to the ground by their own weight. Therefore now, this present fleeting now, is the only time you are sure of; and consequently, this is the only proper time to begin this course. Now then, now, while my voice is sounding in your ears, form the resolution, and carry it into immediate execution. Bear it home upon your hearts to your houses, and there let it dwell until the great work is done. O! that you did but know its importance and necessity! then you could not delay it one moment longer.

And now, if you have any regard for the God that made you, for the Lord that bought you, or for your own everlasting happiness, take this course immediately.—If you have any need of excitements, take the following.

1. Consider your present dangerous situation. You hang over the pit of destruction by the slender thread of life, held up only by the hand of an angry God, as we hold a spider, or some poisonous insect, over a fire, ready to throw it in. You are ripe for destruction, and therefore in danger every day, every hour, every moment, of falling into it. You are as fit for destruction as a murderer for the gallows, or a mortified limb to be cut off. Such polluted vessels of wrath must be thrown out of the way into some dark corner in hell, that they may no more encumber or disgrace the more honourable apartments of the universe. And is this a situation in which it becomes you to be merry, and gay, and thoughtless, and eager after the trifles of time? O! does it not become you rather to be on your knees at the throne of grace, and vigorously pressing into the kingdom of God?

2. Reflect with how much long-suffering God has endured you, notwithstanding all your audacious and repeated provocations. One would think one day's sinning against so holy and gracious a God, by a creature so deeply obliged to him, would

make your case desperate, and that the evening of such a day would be the hour of your execution. But he has patiently borne with you for days, for months, for years, perhaps for scores of years. And all this time he has followed you with his blessings every moment, and granted you the means of preparation for glory. And yet you have been thoughtless, disobedient, ungrateful, rebellious still. How justly then may he inflict punishment upon you! And how industriously will his goodness and severity, his mercy and justice, be displayed in his treatment of you! What could you have desired more, in point of time, opportunity, persuasives, than you have enjoyed? Will it not then appear evident, that your destruction is entirely of yourself, and that, as I have told you before, God and his throne will be guiltless forever?

3. Consider how dreadful will be your punishment, if you should perish at last by your present wilful negligence. My text tells you what will be the design of your punishment; it will be to shew the wrath of God, and make his power known. Such will be your punishment, as will be fit to shew that it is almighty power that inflicts it, and that it is an almighty God who is angry with you. It will be his professed design to display the dreadful glory of his vindictive attributes upon you, particularly his justice, as the supreme Magistrate of the universe: and even his justice deserves to be displayed; for justice is not that ugly, grim, horrible thing, which criminals imagine. In a ruler, especially in the supreme and universal ruler, justice is not only a majestic and terrible, but it is a lovely, amiable, ingratiating attribute, essential to his character, and to the public good, and so it appears to all competent judges; that is, to all who are not self-flattering criminals, and therefore parties. The display of this attribute, therefore, upon proper objects, is necessary, to give a full view of the Deity to the world; to represent him as he is.

Now, whatever attribute of his he intends to display in any of his works, he always does it in a manner worthy of himself. When his design was to display and glorify his creative power, wisdom, and goodness, see! what a stately, well-furnished universe he spoke into being! What a magnificent, God-like building! When his design was to shew the riches of his grace towards our guilty race, what wonders did he perform! What inimitable exploits of condescension and love! His only begotten

Son must become a man, must struggle with all the calamities of life for three-and-thirty long and painful years, must expire in torture upon an ignominious cross, and redeem the guilty with the blood of his heart. This was Godlike love and grace indeed, beyond all example. O! *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* Micah vii. 18. He is as much distinguished from all other beings by the wonders of his love and grace, as by the eternity of his existence, or by that wisdom which planned the universe, or that power which produced it out of nothing. When in prosecution of the same design, he intends to give a farther display of the riches of his glorious grace upon the vessels of mercy, what godlike provisions hath he made for them! *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things he hath prepared for them.* He hath prepared for them a city, such a glorious residence, that he is not ashamed to be called their God. He is not ashamed to own the relation, because he has acted up to the character, and worthy of himself. Heb. xi. 16. And when his design is to shew his avenging wrath, and make his punitive power known; when it is to shew what Godlike punishments he can inflict, such as may, by their terror, declare him to be the author, and serve as loud warnings to all present, and, perhaps, future creations, to deter them from the breach of his sacred laws; and when the subjects of the punishment are strong capacious vessels of wrath, fit for nothing but destruction; I say, when this is the case, what Godlike vengeance will he execute! what signal, unexampled punishment will he inflict! The design of punishment, which is not the reformation of the criminal, but the benefit of others, and the display of his perfections, require that he give a loose to all the terrors of his power. And what miracles of misery, what terrible illustrious monuments of vengeance will that perform and erect! As far surpassing all the punishments inflicted by mortals, as the creation of the world out of nothing exceeds all the works of human art.

And are you proof against the energy of such considerations as these? Then you are dreadfully fitted for destruction indeed! For the strongest persuasives to deter you from it, which God himself can reveal, or the human mind conceive, have no weight upon you!

But may I hope that I shall succeed at least with some of you this day to fly from this tremendous destruction, into which you are this moment ready to fall? Alas! it is hard, if even a stranger cannot prevail with so much as one soul, in so large an assembly, and in a point so reasonable, and so strongly enforced by your own interest. But I must leave this warning with you, and if you do not remember it now, you will remember it millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will torment you with intolerable anguish.

There are sundry in this assembly, I doubt not, who, by comparing their dispositions with the nature of heavenly happiness, may make the welcome discovery, that they are, in some measure, prepared for it. To such happy souls I have time only to say, that if this be your character, you may be sure that immense happiness shall be yours: your present heavenly temper is a certain pledge and earnest of it. You may be sure God would never make you fit for it, and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other hand, if you find that the dispositions of hell are subdued in you, assure yourselves God will not doom you to it. Can you think he would gain your hearts and allure your love, and then bid you depart from him, to languish and pine away with the eager anxious pantings of disappointed bereaved love? Will he doom you to reside forever among those whose works you detest, and whose society you abhor? No; he will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy, and then advance you to dwell forever in that presence which you love, in the element of holiness; to breathe in that clear refined air; to live in that wholesome climate, so agreeable to your constitution; to be employed in those services in which you delight; to enjoy that sublime and delicate happiness which you relish, and to converse in that society which you affect, and which is of the same temper and spirit with you.—And for that blessed region may we all be prepared, and there may we all meet at last, to enjoy that endless felicity which awaits those who firmly put their confidence in God, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Sermon 44.

The Nature and Necessity of True Repentance.

Acts xvii. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

WE here find St. Paul in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity, lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, or Mars-Hill, where the wisest men and best philosophers of this wise and philosophical city were met together; in the same court where Socrates, the most likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honours of martyrdom, had been accused and condemned, and for very much the same crime, namely, introducing a foreign religion, and bringing the gods of the country in contempt. And how does the apostle conduct himself in these critical circumstances? Why, instead of amusing them with a learned harangue: instead of confirming them in their idolatry, and vindicating himself, by publicly professing, with poor Socrates, that he worshipped the gods of the country, and sacrificed at the established altars; instead of this, I say, the apostle boldly, though in a very handsome and genteel manner, exposes their superstitions, calls them off from their idols to the worship of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and, having asserted these fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation, and preached Jesus Christ to them, as the Saviour and Judge of the world.

In my text he inculcates the great gospel duty of repentance as binding upon all mankind, (philosophers and judges, as well as the illiterate vulgar) in Athens, as well as in the most barbarous countries of the earth.

The times of this ignorance God winked at. By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the gospel in the heathen world, who for many ages were sunk in the most gross ignorance of the true God, and in the most absurd and impious superstition and idolatry, notwithstanding the loud remonstrances of the light of reason, and the various lessons of

the book of creation, so legible to all. When it is said that God winked at these times of ignorance, it may mean, as our translators seem to have understood it, that God seemed to connive at, or not to take notice of this universal ignorance that had overspread the world, so as to send his prophets to them for their reformation. In this view, there is a strong antithesis between the first and the last parts of my text. *q. d.* "God once seemed to connive at the idolatry and superstition of mankind, and to let them go on, without sending his messengers to call them to repentance; and in these dark times their impenitence was the less inexcusable. But now the case is altered; now he has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands all men every where to repent; and therefore, if you now continue impenitent, you are utterly inexcusable." Or the word may be rendered, *God overlooked* these times of ignorance: he overlooked them by way of displeasure: he would not favour such guilty times with a gracious glance of his eye: and in righteous displeasure, he did not so much as give them an explicit call to repentance: or he overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, he did not destroy it, but bore it from age to age, with a design to publish a more explicit command to repent: and now that time is come; that time, for the sake of which a long-suffering God had borne with a guilty world so long. Now he commands all men every where to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews: every where in the dark heathen lands, as well as in the enlightened spot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reason, and strongly enforced by the Jewish religion; but it is the gospel that affords the strongest motives and allurements, and the best helps and advantages for repentance. The gospel was first introduced by a loud call to repentance: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, was the united cry of John the Baptist, of Christ, and his disciples. And St. Paul sums up the substance of his preaching in these two articles, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts xx. 21.

Repentance is universally acknowledged to be an essential ingredient in the religion of a sinner. They who deny the christian religion, and particularly the necessity of Christ's death to make atonement for sin, they deny it upon this supposition, that the light of nature teaches us the necessity of repentance, and that alone is a sufficient atonement. Thus, even infidels, Jews,

Pagans and Mahometans, agree in asserting the necessity of repentance. It is this grand catholic uncontroverted duty, and not the little disputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you: And *he that hath an ear to hear let him hear.*

But here, I hope, you are ready to request me, "Pray let us know what repentance is, before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent, and whether we have truly repented or not?"

If this be your desire, it directly coincides with my main design: and I shall endeavour, with the utmost plainness and faithfulness, to tell you what gospel repentance is, and help you to determine whether ever you have been the subjects of it.

Now it is evident both from scripture and common sense, that every pang of sorrow for sin, and every instance of reformation, is not that repentance which we have now under consideration. If horror of conscience, and fears of hell, could constitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent; for his horror and fear were so great that he could not live under it. If sudden pangs of terror and remorse, with some resolutions to amend, could constitute true repentance, then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent; for we are told, that, *while Paul reasoned before him, concerning temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, he trembled,* Acts xxiv. 25, and seemed resolved to give him another hearing on these subjects. If a reformation in many instances were the same thing with repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was a true penitent; for we are told, *he heard John gladly, and did many things at his exaltation.* Mark vi. 20. These knew nothing of repentance unto life; and therefore we may feel what they felt, and yet remain impenitent.

I scarcely think there are any of you so hardy and reprobated of God, as never to have experienced any sort of repentance. It is likely there is not one in this assembly but has sometimes been scared with dreadful apprehensions of death, hell, and the consequences of sin: and perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your sinful life, and trembled to think what would be the end of it. You have also prayed to God to forgive you, and resolved and promised you would reform. Nay, it is possible, the terrors of the Lord and a sense of guilt, may have almost overwhelmed and distracted you, haunted you from day to day, and disturbed your nightly slumbers. On these accounts you conclude, per-

haps, that you are true penitents: but, alas! after all this, you may be but impenitent sinners. True evangelical repentance has the following distinguishing characteristics; by which I request you to examine yourselves.

I. It extends to the heart as well as to the practice. Every true penitent, indeed, has an affecting sense of the many sins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not stop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the secrets of wickedness within. He traces up these corrupt streams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. A blind mind, a stupid heart, a heart disaffected to God, that could live content for months, for years without loving God, a heart dead to his service, a heart insensible to eternal things, a heart excessively set upon things below, a secure conscience, a stubborn ungovernable will; these, to the true penitent, appear the greatest crimes, while, by a thoughtless world, they are hardly noticed as slight imperfections. Hence when his walk in the eyes of men is unblameable, and even imitable, he still finds daily occasion for repentance and humiliation before God. For O! his heart, or his inward temper, is not such as it should be: he does not love God nor man as he knows he should: he does not delight in the service of God as he should: every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms him, like a symptom of the plague, or the stirring of an enemy in ambush; and he is immediately in arms to make resistance. The world in general are very well pleased if the matter of their actions be good, and if they abstain from what is materially evil: but this does not satisfy the true penitent: he narrowly inspects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions; and there he finds sufficient cause for mortification and sorrow, even when his actions in themselves are lawful and good. In short, every true penitent is a critic upon his own heart; and there he finds constant cause for repentance while in this imperfect state.

The proof of this is so evident, that I need hardly mention it. Can you suppose it will satisfy a true lover of God and goodness, just to have a clean outside, while his heart is a mere mass of corruption? Will it content such a one, that he performs all the outward duties of religion, if there be no life or spirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent, who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedness, though he indulges it, and loves it in his heart? No; such repentance is a

shallow, superficial thing, and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential psalm (li.) he not only confesses his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, and earnestly prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psalm li. 5, 6, 10. And he is deeply sensible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an essential ingredient in true repentance, do not some of you see, that you are destitute of it? and, consequently, that you are still impenitent sinners, and ready to perish as such? A dreadful conviction! But do not shut your eyes against it; for, until you see your error, you cannot correct it.

II. In evangelical repentance there is a deep sense of the intrinsic evil of sin, and a hearty sorrow for it as done against God.

Many that think they repent of sin have no proper sorrow upon the account of sin against God, but only on account of the punishment it is like to bring upon themselves. It is not sin they hate, but hell. Were it possible for them to enjoy their sins, and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence repentance is really an hardship in their view. Need I tell you that such a servile, forced repentance, is good for nothing? If the criminal is very sorry, not because he has offended, but because he is to be executed for it, would you call him a true penitent? If your slave cries and trembles, not from a sense of his offence against you, but for fear of the lash, do you think he truly repents of it? No; it is self-love, and not the love of duty; it is fear of the punishment, and not hatred of the crime, that is the principle of this servile, ungenerous repentance.

Hence you may see you may be very sorry for your sin, because it may fix a scandal upon your character, because it may have injured your temporal estate, or because it may ruin you in the eternal world: I say, you may be very sorry for sin on such servile reasons as these, and yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is a more kindly, generous thing; it proceeds from an affecting sense of the baseness and malignity of sin in itself. Sin appears to the true penitent, as some sorts of poison to us; that is, not only hateful because it is deadly and destructive, but hateful and nauseous in itself. I do not mean that the fear of punishment is no ingredient in true repentance:

the love of God and self-love are very consistent if the latter is kept in a due subordination to the former ; and therefore the fear of punishment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of punishment is not the principal, much less the only spring and motive of true repentance ; the true penitent hates sin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. Though it were allowed him to go to heaven in the ways of sin, he would by no means choose it. Heaven itself would be the less acceptable to him, if it were the end of such a course.

He is also deeply sorry for sin, as against God, or as contrary to him. As rebellion against his authority, as a contrariety to his holiness, as an opposition to his will and pleasure, as a most base, ungrateful return for all his goodness, and as the cause of all the agonies of the blessed Jesus ; he hates it, he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relentings of heart. It was sin in this view, as against God, that lay heaviest upon David's heart. He seems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife, while all his attention was engrossed by the horror of his crime, as against God. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* Psalm li. 4. It was this view of sin that armed Joseph, in the heat of youth, with power to resist the solicitations of his mistress. *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?* Gen. xxxix. 9. O ! the thought of sinning against God, against so glorious, so gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he should treat so good and holy a God so basely. This thought would break his heart, even though sin should be attended with no danger to himself ; and it does in fact grieve him, and melt down his soul into generous sorrows, even when he has not one thought of his own danger.

Nay, of so generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent soul never melts so freely, nor bursts out into such a flood of ingenuous sorrows, as when it has reason to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it sees the base ingratitude and complicated vileness of sin, as committed against so gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reason to him why he should never forgive himself. If God had concealed the glory of his grace, and rendered himself less lovely, he would be less sensible of the evil of sinning against him, and less sorry

for it. But O! that he should sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought cuts him to the heart. Hence the evidences of pardon, and the hope of salvation, do not put an end to true repentance, but, on the other hand, promote it. This blessed hope indeed abates the terrors of a slave, and mixes many sweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is so far from putting a stop to the flow of generous, filial sorrows, that it opens new springs for them, and causes them to gush out in larger streams!

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell stands open before them, and the load of guilt oppresses them. But could they believe that God has forgiven their sin, and that they shall notwithstanding be saved, they would be very easy about it; nay, they would most ungenerously, from this very consideration, take encouragement to sin the more boldly! This is more than the secret sentiment, it is the avowed profession of multitudes. Ask them how they can go on impenitent in sin, and be easy in such a course? their answer is, *God is merciful; and they hope he will forgive and save them after all.* What is this but an explicit purpose to sin against God, because he is good, and to abuse his mercy, if he will be merciful? Nothing but the lash can keep such sordid, slavish souls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous passion. If God will have them to repent, he must give them no hope of pardon and happiness; for as this hope rises, their repentance ceases, and sin appears a harmless inoffensive thing. But how different is this from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a sin-pardoning than a sin-punishing God. And never does his heart melt so kindly, as when under the warm beams of divine love; never does he repent so heartily as with a pardon in his hand, and with the prospect of heaven open before him. Do not think this an excessive refinement of repentance, for common sense may tell you, that God will never accept of that repentance which has the punishment and not the crime for its object; and this generous temper is assigned to the true penitent in the sacred scriptures. See Ezek. xvi. 63. After God has promised many blessings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the consequence, *Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* So, (Ezek. xxxvi.

31. After many promises of rich blessings, it is said, *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.* You see this shame and confusion, this penitential remembrance and self-loathing, are the effects of God's being reconciled. When he is pacified, then they are ashamed, confounded, and loathe themselves.

Brethren, does your repentance stand this test? Examine and see; for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

III. True repentance extends to all known sin, without exception.

If sin, considered in itself, or sin, as done against God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows, that whatever is sin in itself, or against God, must be the object of it. Every sin, whether it consists in neglecting what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden: whether it be immediately against God, against our neighbour, or ourselves; whether it be fashionable, constitutional, pleasing, or painful; every sin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He should indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation; but he should not except any of them, even the smallest. They are all forbidden by the same divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all opposite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to him; and, therefore, they must be all repented of. This was the character of David, *That he hated every false way.* Psalm cxix. 128.

Now, does not this consideration prove some of you impenitent sinners? Do you not except some sins out of your repentance, and plead for an indulgence to them? If so, you may be sure your hearts are not right with God.

IV. True repentance always includes reformation.

There are many whose whole life seems to be one continued struggle between the strength of sin and conscience; and they run round in a circle of sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning, all their days. Sin is so strong that it will prevail, in spite of all the struggles of conscience; and conscience remains so vigorous, that it still continues to struggle, though without success. They commit sin, then are sorry for it; then commit it again: and in this vicissitude they spend their lives. Nay, the repent-

ance of some is so far from reforming them from sin, that it rather encourages them to return to it; for now, they think, they have cleared off the old score, and they may venture upon a new one; till that also swells very high, and then they have another fit of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas! brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that sorrow for sin avail, which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reason why sorrow is a necessary ingredient in repentance, is, because we will not, we cannot forsake sin, till it be made bitter to us; and, therefore, when our sorrow has not this effect, it is altogether useless. Can that repentance save you, which is so far from being an ingredient of holiness, that it *is* a preparative to sin? A repentance that answers no other end but to make conscience easy after a debauch, and prepare it for another surfeit!

Is this the nature of true repentance? No; it is the character of every true penitent, that sin has not an habitual dominion over him. Rom. vi. 14. Remember that maxim of the wise man, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.* Prov. xxviii. 13. Observe, not only confessing, but also forsaking them, is necessary to the obtaining of mercy. The same thing appears from the various expressions used in scripture to describe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts: which expressions signify not only sorrow for sin, but especially reformation from it. In vain, therefore, do you pretend to repent, if you still go on in the sins you repent of. If you indulge yourselves in any one known sin, however small you may think it, you are utter strangers to true repentance. I do not mean by this, that true penitents are perfectly free from sin in this life: alas! their painful experience makes the best of them sensible of the contrary. But I mean two things, which deserve your notice: the one is, that every true penitent has an habitual dominion over sin: the principles of religion and virtue are prevailingly uppermost in his soul, and habitually regulate his behaviour. As for gross, overt acts of sin, he is habitually free from them, and, indeed, generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no such mighty exploit to abstain from drunkenness, swearing, injustice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual prevailing

bent of his soul, and the matter of his daily lamentation. And this introduces the other remark I had in view ; which is this: that it does not appear a kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life : but it is the daily grief and burden of his soul that he is not. Many seem well pleased that this is an imperfect state, because, they think it furnishes them with a plea or an excuse for their neglect of the service of God, and for their sinful indulgences. In short, sin is their delight, and, therefore, freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them ; and they are glad they are in such a state as will admit of their retaining it. Now such persons, as I observed, do really esteem it a privilege to be imperfect, and they rejoice in it as their happiness, that they are able to sin : but it is quite the reverse with the true penitent : perfection in holiness, and an entire freedom from sin, is the object of his eager desire and most vigorous pursuit ; and he can never be easy until he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleasure of serving God as he would in the present state, he must, at least, enjoy the pleasure of grieving over, and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from sin, his old enemy, he will, at least, take a kind of pleasing revenge upon it, by hating and resisting it, and loathing it, and himself upon the account of it. In short, the remains of sin, all things considered, and taking one time with another, afford him more uneasiness, perplexity and sorrow, than all other things in the world. O ! if he were but delivered from this body of death, he would be happy, however oppressed with other burdens ; but while this lies upon him, all the world cannot render him easy and happy.

From the whole, you see that reformation is an essential ingredient of true repentance ; and in vain do you pretend that you repent of sin, if you still indulge yourselves in it. You may try to excuse yourselves from the frailty of your nature, the imperfection of the present state, or the strength of temptation ; but in spite of all your excuses, this is an eternal truth, that unless your repentance reforms you, and turns you from the outward practice or secret indulgence of those sins you are sorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

V. And lastly, Evangelical repentance implies a believing application to God for pardon only through Jesus Christ.

Evangelical repentance does not consist in despairing agonies and hopeless horrors of conscience, but is attended with an hum-

ble hope of forgiveness and acceptance ; and this hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jesus, and not of our repentance and reformation.*

How opposite to this is the prevailing spirit of the world ! If they repent, it is to make amends for their sins, and procure the divine favour by their repentance ; and thus, even their repentance becomes a snare to them, and one cause of their destruction. In this sense, a bold saying of one of the fathers may be true : "That more souls are destroyed by their repentance than by their sin ;" that is, sin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of trusting in it to recommend them to God. But even their superficial, servile repentance has the appearance of goodness, and therefore they make a righteousness of it ; and upon this quicksand they build their hopes, until they sink into remediless ruin.

Thus I have endeavoured to open to you the great gospel duty of repentance, as distinguished from all counterfeits and delusive appearances. I hope you have all understood me : for I have laboured to make myself understood, and spoke as plainly as I could. If you have experienced such a generous, evangelical repentance as has been described, you may venture your souls upon it, that it is repentance unto life ; but if you are strangers to it, I may leave it to yourselves to determine, whether you can be saved in your present condition.

I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illustration of this subject. The first is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love, and the other low and slavish principles of nature, may produce a servile, mercenary repentance, proceeding from the fears of punishment ; but only the love of God, and the noble principles of the new nature, can bring you to a kindly, ingenuous repentance, from noble motives ; and it is the Holy Spirit alone that can shed abroad the love of God in your hearts, and implant these generous principles of the new nature.—The second remark is, that this generous, supernatural repentance, is not the first repentance of an awakened sinner. No ; he is first alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehensions of punishment ; and all the springs of nature are put in motion before these nobler principles are infused, and he is brought to a genuine, evan-

* See the foregoing Sermon.

gelical repentance.—Therefore, thirdly, The only way to attain to this supernatural repentance is, to use all proper means to excite the springs of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your sins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are destitute of the love of God, let self-love excite you to be sorry for your sins. While you cannot see the intrinsic evil of sin as against God, see at least the insupportable misery it is like to bring upon you. If you have not such generous souls as to mourn over sin as against a sin-forgiving God, at least mourn over it as against a sin-punishing God. And while the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles, and give you repentance unto life!

My subject is now ripe for an application; and this shall be nothing else but a short illustration of the other parts of my text.

Let me then, in the first place, publish the royal edict of the King of heaven in this assembly: *God commandeth all men to repent;* he commands you in various ways; commands you with the motions of his Spirit striving with you, and by the voice of your own consciences, which is the voice of God; commands you by his providence, which tends to lead you to repentance, and especially by his gospel, which he has sent to you for this end. He now commands you by my mouth; for while I speak what his word authorises, it does not lose its efficacy, nor cease to be his word by passing through my lips. Remember, he commands you, he lays his authority upon you, to repent. You are not left to your discretion in the case. Dare you reject the known, express command of the divine Majesty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, saying, *Repent! repent!* would it not startle you? would it not shock you, to set yourselves in opposition to so express and immediate a command of the God that made you? Well, his command to you in the gospel is as real, as authoritative and binding, as an immediate voice from heaven. And dare you disobey it? Dare you go home this day with this additional guilt upon you, of disobeying a known command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke him to jealousy? Are you stronger than he? Can you harden yourselves against him, and yet prosper? I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing, The King of kings, my Master, has issued out his royal mandate, requiring you, by these presents, to repent, upon pain of everlasting dam-

nation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears, therefore, this day repent. If you refuse to repent, let this conviction follow you home, and perpetually haunt you, that you have this day, when you were met together under pretence of worshipping God, knowingly disobeyed the great gospel-command. And to the great God you must answer for your disobedience.

In the next place, my text tells you, he commands all men to repent: all men, of all ranks and characters. This command, therefore, is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all, *Repent!* Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, free and bond;—Repent, ye young sinners, now, while your hearts are soft and tender, and your passions easily moved, and you are not hardened by a long course of habitual sinning:—Repent, ye grey-headed veteran sinners, now at last repent, when the load of sins, heaped up for so many years, lies so heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the slippery brink of eternity:—Repent, ye rich men; ye are not above this command:—Repent, ye poor; ye are not beneath it:—Repent, ye poor slaves; your colour, or low state in life, cannot free you from this command:—Repent, ye masters, for your sins against your Master, who is in heaven. In short, God commandeth all men, kings and subjects, the highest and the lowest, and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

To render the call still more pointed and universal, it is added, *He commandeth all men, every where, to repent* Every where, in city and country; in palaces and cottages; in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, wherever the trumpet of the gospel sounds the alarm to repent; in Virginia, in this very spot, where we now stand. Here the command of God finds you out, and calls you to repent. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmost boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there are sinners under a dispensation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the busy merchant in his store, to the laborious planter in the field, and to the tradesman in his shop; to the sailor tossing on the waves, and to the inhabitant of solid ground; to the man of learning in his study, and to the illiterate peasant; to the judge upon the bench, as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of sobriety, to the unthinking rake, and to the brutish debauchee; to the minister in the pulpit, and to the people in their pews; to the dissenter in the meeting-house, and to the conformist in

church ; to husbands and wives ; to parents and children ; to masters and servants ; to all the sons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell, whatever they are doing ; to all these the command reaches. And do you not find yourselves included n it ? If you are men, if you dwell any where upon this guilty globe, you are included ; for let me tell you once more, God commandeth all men, every where, to repent.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your present duty : For *now he commandeth all men every where to repent :* Now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the gospel sheds heavenly day among you : Now, when he will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes strict notice of it with just indignation : Now, while the day of grace lasts, and there is place left for repentance : Now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and while his spirit is striving with you : Now, while his judgments are in the earth, and your country is surrounded with the terrors of war : Now, while he is publishing his command to a guilty country to repent, by the horrid sound of trumpets and cannons :* Now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year, the next week, or perhaps, the very next moment : Now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exercise of your reason ; and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony : Now, and not tomorrow ; not upon a sick bed ; not in a dying hour : Now is the time, in which God commands you to repent : he does not allow you one hour's delay ; and what right have you to allow it to yourselves ? Therefore, now, this moment, let us all repent : all, without exception. Why should there not be one assembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe ? And, O ! why should it not be this ? Why should not repentance be as universal as sin ? And, since we are all sinners, O ! why should we not all be humble penitents ? Repent you must, either in time or eternity, upon earth, or in hell. You cannot possibly avoid it. The question is not, *Shall I repent ?* for that is beyond a doubt. But the question is, " Shall I repent now, when it may reform and save me ; or shall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my punishment, and can answer no end but to torment me ?" And is this a hard question ! Does not common sense determine it in favour of the present time ? Therefore, let the duty be as extensively observed

* This Sermon is dated New-Kent, May 22, 1757.

as it is commanded: Let all men every where repent. Blessed God! pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, that there may be a great mourning among us, that each of us may mourn apart, and our wives apart; that we may *mourn, as one that mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for a first born.* Zech. xii. 10. Grant this for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Sermon 45.

THE TENDER ANXIETIES OF MINISTERS FOR THEIR PEOPLE.

GALAT. IV. 19, 20. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*

NOTHING could be more agreeable to a generous spirit that loves God and mankind, than to be fully satisfied of the real goodness and happiness of his fellow-creatures; and nothing is more painful than an anxious jealousy and fear in a matter he has so much at heart. Some profess themselves very easy in this respect, and they glory in this easiness as a high pitch of charity and benevolence. They hope well of all—except, perhaps, their personal enemies, who, for that very reason, must be very worthless and execrable creatures. Though scripture and reason do jointly declare, that men of bad lives, who habitually indulge themselves in sin, and neglect the known duties of religion and morality, are no objects of rational charity at all, but must be judged destitute of true piety by all that would judge according to evidence; "yet, God forbid, say they, that they should judge any man. They are not of a censorious spirit, but generous and benevolent in their hopes of all." They can venture to hope that the tree is good, even when the fruit is corrupt: that is, that a good man may lead a bad life. But this temper ought not to be honoured with the noble name of Charity. Let it be called ignorance, gross ignorance of the nature of true religion; or infidelity and avowed disbelief of what the scripture determines concerning the character of a good man; or let it be called indifferency, an indifferency whether men be now good or bad, and whether they shall be happy or miserable hereafter. Where there is no love

or affectionate concern, there will be no uneasy jealousy. Or let it be called a mere artifice for self-defence. Men are often cautious of condemning others, not from benevolence to them, but out of mercy to themselves, not being willing to involve themselves in the same condemnation; since they are conscious they are as bad as others, they must be sparing to others, in order to spare themselves. These are the true names of what passes current under the name of Charity in the world.

St. Paul, whose heart was capable of the kindest sentiments to mankind, could not enjoy the pleasure of this promiscuous charity. He could not thus conclude well of all, not even of all under the christian name; not of all whom he once hoped were his spiritual children; no, not of all the members of the once flourishing churches of Galatia, where he met with so friendly a reception, and had so much promising appearance of success. *I stand in doubt of you*, says he.

The state and character of these churches, we may partly learn from this epistle. A considerable number of Galatians had been converted from heathenism to christianity by St. Paul's ministry; and in the transports of their first zeal they made a very promising appearance: hence he puts them in mind that they had begun in the spirit, (ch. iii. 3.) that when they first started in the christian race, they had run well, (ch. v. 7.) that they had suffered many things in the cause of the gospel; (ch. iii. 4.) and as to their affection to him, it was very extraordinary. *Ye received me*, says he, *as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ.—I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* (ch. iv. 14, 15.) But alas! how naturally do the most flourishing churches tend to decay! How frail and fickle is man! How inconstant popular applause! These promising churches of Galatia soon began to decline; and their favourite, St. Paul, their apostle and spiritual father, appeared in quite another light, appeared as their enemy, because he told them the truth. There was a spurious set of preachers in that age, who corrupted the pure gospel of Christ with Jewish mixture. The ceremonies of the law of Moses, and the traditions of their elders, they held as of perpetual and universal obligation; and as such they imposed them even upon the christian converts from among the Gentiles, who never had any thing to do with them. Had they been recommended

to their observance as indifferences or prudentials, it would not have had such bad influence upon christianity. But they continued to impose them as absolutely necessary to salvation, and represented the righteousness revealed in the gospel as insufficient without these additions. Thus they laboured to corrupt the great doctrine of a sinner's justification by faith alone, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that grand article upon which the church stands or falls, according to an old observation of Luther. These judaizing teachers had artfully insinuated themselves into the Galatian churches, and spread the poison of their legal doctrines. This sunk St. Paul in the esteem of his converts, and they exchanged his pure gospel for another, more adapted to their taste. In consequence of this, religion was declining fast among them ; and St. Paul is alarmed lest he should have bestowed labour in vain upon them.

This epistle is an affectionate attempt to recover them. It is for the most part argumentative ; for its author was not fond of moving their passions without enlightening their understandings. But sometimes he melts into the most pathetic strains, and gives the most affecting touches to the heart. Such a tender, passionate address is this in my text. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice ; for I stand in doubt of you.* What a tender, moving, paternal address is this !

My little children—This is a fond affectionate appellation ; the language of a tender father. It strongly expresses his paternal love and solicitude for the Galatians. The same style he uses to the Thessalonians—*You know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children*, 1 Thess. ii. 11. He may also call them his children, to intimate that he had begotten them by the gospel as spiritual children to God : or rather as the following words suggest, he alludes to the sickness and anxiety of a mother in conception, and the pangs and agonies of child-bearing ; and by these he illustrates the pangs and agonies of zeal, and the affectionate solicitude he had felt for them while Christ was forming in them under his ministry, and they were in the critical hour of the new-birth. He might well call them his children, because he had suffered all the pains of a mother for them. He adds the epithet little, *my little children*, because the fond language of a parent affects

such diminitives, or perhaps to intimate their small progress in christianity. They were but little children in grace still.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again—I have just observed this is an allusion to the painful disorders and pangs of conception and birth ;* by which the apostle strongly represents the agonies of affectionate zeal, and tender anxieties he felt for the Galatians. But what rendered them doubly painful to him, was, that he was obliged to feel them more than once—*I travail of you in birth again.* He had cheerful hopes that Christ was indeed formed in them, and that they were born from above, and consequently that he should have no more occasion to feel those agonies and throes he had suffered for them. But alas ! he had now reason to fear the contrary, and, therefore, he must again feel the same pangs and agonies : he must *travail in birth again,*

Until Christ be formed in you ; that is, until they are made new creatures after the image of Christ ; until the sacred fœtus be formed in their hearts ; until the heavenly embryo grow and ripen for birth, or until they be conformed to Jesus Christ in heart and practice ; till then he can never be easy. Though they should retain the christian name, though they should make great proficiency in other attainments, though they should become as much attached to him as ever, yet he must still feel the pangs of birth for them, till Christ be really formed in them.

I desire to be present with you now. In his absence they had been corrupted by the judaizing teachers ; and he hoped his presence might have some happy influence to recover them. He was impatient of the restraints of a literary correspondence, and longed to pour out all his heart to them in a free address.

I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice. When he left them they were in a flourishing state, and therefore he took his leave of them in the warmest language of affection, approbation and confidence. " *But now*, says he, *I wish to be present with you*, that I may alter my address ; that I may change my voice into more severe and alarming strains ; and instead of congratulating you upon your happy state, warn you of your danger." Or his meaning may be, " I find myself obliged to use severe language with you in this epistle, which is by no means agreeable to me. I therefore desire to be present with you, that I may in person use means for your recovery, that

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* Critics observe that the word ὠδίνω is expressive of the sickness of conception, as well as the pangs of birth.

thereupon I may change my voice, and speak to you in a soft approving strain, which is always most pleasing to me, as it would be to you. It is quite contrary to my inclination to use such chiding language to my dear little children." Or perhaps he may mean, "I desire to be present with you, that I may know the different characters of your members, and that I may be able to change my voice, and address them accordingly; that I may warn, admonish, exhort, or comfort you, as your respective cases may require. I would willingly speak comfortably to you all promiscuously, but this I cannot now do."

For I stand in doubt of you. When I parted with you last, I had great confidence in you, and hoped that you would persevere: but now I stand in doubt of you, and therefore must alter my voice to you if I were present with you. While I am thus doubtful of you, I cannot speak comfortably to you all promiscuously; but I must honestly tell you my suspicions of you, and, until there appear a change in you, I cannot change my voice into more pleasing strains.

My dear hearers, the charge is entrusted to me by the great Shepherd, for which I must give an account: you and I are too nearly concerned in this text to consider it merely as a piece of history, referring only to St. Paul and the Galatians 1700 years ago: I must bring it nearer home in a particular application. God forbid so vain and proud a thought should ever find place in my heart, as to set myself upon the footing of equality with St. Paul, the chief of the apostles. I will not tell you how much and how often I have been mortified, especially of late, at the thoughts of my vast inferiority, not only to him, but to the ordinary ministers of Christ of a lower class. You seldom hear a sermon from me but what fills me with shame and confusion in the review; and I almost cease to wonder that the gospel has so little success among you, while managed by so unskilful a hand. Yet I hope I may truly profess so much sincere affection and concern for you, as to warrant me to borrow the words of the apostle, though in a much lower sense: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice*, according to the variety of your cases; *for I am in doubt of some of you.* And I hope you are disposed to give me a serious hearing, and a serious hearing is justly expected from you; for, remember, the day of death and the

day of judgment will come, and that you must die, you must be judged, you must be doomed to your everlasting state.

I stand in doubt of some of you. I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy. And if there be no ground for it, you will forgive me; for if it be an error, it is the error of love. Though I was an entire stranger to you all I might justly harbour this jealousy of some of you, upon this general principle, that there never yet was so pure a church met in one place, as not to have one insincere, hypocritical professor in it. Even the apostles, the most select society that ever was formed, had a Judas among them. And can we expect more than apostolic purity in such a large promiscuous crowd as generally frequents this house? In every church there are, alas! some suspicious characters; and my present design is to describe such characters, and then leave it to yourselves to judge whether there be not such among you.

Forgive me, if I suppose some of you live in the greatest neglect of family-religion. You lie down and rise up, perhaps, for weeks, months, and years, and yet never call your families together morning and evening to worship the great God who has placed you in families. If this be the character of any of you, then I must plainly tell you, I stand in doubt of you. I really doubt you have no relish for the worship of God; for if you had, how could you, as it were, excommunicate yourselves from the precious privilege of drawing near to God with your dear families, and devoting yourselves and them to him? I really doubt you have no deep affecting concern for the salvation of your domestics, nor consequently for your own, otherwise how could you neglect a duty that has so direct, a natural tendency to make religious impressions upon their minds? Can any thing more naturally tend to make them sensible of their obligations, their sins, their wants and mercies, than to hear you solemnly mention these things every day, in the presence of the great God? Your character in this is opposite to that of good men in all ages. You will find in the history of the patriarchs, particularly of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, That, wherever they had a dwelling for themselves, they had an altar for God. You find David returning from the solemnities of public worship to bless his house, 2 Sam. vi. 20, and saying, *Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray.* Psalm lv. 17. You find Daniel praying, as he was wont, three times a day, even when the penalty was not only the loss of his place at court, but his being thrown as a prey to hungry

lions. You find St. Paul saluting some of the primitive christians, *with the church that was in their house*. Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Coloss. iv. 15. Philem. 2. which is a strong intimation that they made their families little churches by celebrating the worship of God in them; for a church, without the worship of God, would be an absurd society indeed. I had almost forgotten the example of Joshua, who bravely resolved, *That whatever others should do, he and his house would serve the Lord.* Joshua xxiv. 15. You see then, your character in this important instance is the opposite to that of the saints in all ages. And have I not reason to stand in doubt of you, especially as you cannot now plead ignorance; since you have been so often instructed in your duty on this head? You may plead your incapacity or hurry of business, or that your neighbours would point at you as ostentatious Pharisees. But this is so far from clearing you, that it renders you still more suspicious. If these be the reasons of your neglect, I greatly doubt you love your reputation and the world more than the honour of God, more than his service, and more than the immortal interest of your children and servants. How would it shock you if God should authoritatively lay that restraint upon you which you voluntarily put upon yourselves? Suppose he should say, "I will allow all the families around you to worship me every day, but I lay your family under an interdict; from them I will receive no worship:" how would this shock you? And will you of your own accord take this curse upon yourselves? O! think of it, and this very evening consecrate your houses to God.

Again, I will suppose some of you generally observe the outward duties of religion: you pray in secret and in your families; you attend upon public worship: you receive the sacraments, and you sometimes fast: but generally this is but a dull round of lifeless formalities. Even a judicious christian may suspect that your whole hearts are not engaged, that the vigour of your spirits is not exerted, and that there is no spiritual life in your devotions. This man may suspect; and He who searches the heart may see it is so in fact. Now if this be your character, I must tell you, *I stand in doubt of you.* If you are really lukewarm Laodiceans, the case is quite plain: it is not a matter of doubt, but of sure belief, that you are the most odious creatures upon earth to Jesus Christ. He could wish you were cold or hot, or any thing rather than what you are. And where the appearances of such formali-

ty are found, where there is a dull uniformity in all your devotions, without any signs of those divine changes which the gracious presence of God produces, your case looks very suspicious, even to men. I really stand in doubt of you ; and you have great need to look to yourselves, lest the suspicion should be well grounded.

Some of you perhaps think you can easily clear yourselves from the suspicion of formality, for you have often had your hearts melted, your passions raised, and you find a great change in your dispositions in devotion : sometimes you are cold and dull, and at other times all zeal and ecstacy : but notwithstanding this, there may be great reason to doubt concerning some of you. I doubt these are only warm flights of the passions, under the influence of a heated imagination, and not such rational emotions of the heart as proceed from a well-enlightened mind, that sees the nature, importance, and excellency of divine things. I fear these warm passions have no effectual tendency to make you better ; that is, to subdue your favourite sins in heart and life, to make you more watchful against them, and to long and labour after universal holiness. I am afraid they have no tendency to humble you, to degrade you in your own eyes, and make you appear mean and vile to yourselves, but on the other hand, that they tend to set you off to advantage in your own view, and to make you think highly of yourselves. I am afraid they are shallow and superficial, and never reach deep enough to transform the settled temper of the whole soul, and give it a prevailing, habitual bent towards God. I am afraid, among your various exercises of heart, you have none of those humbling, heart-breaking sensations which a poor believer often feels, when lying helpless before God, and casting his guilty soul upon Jesus Christ. I am afraid your exercises are of a more selfish, haughty and presumptuous kind. I am afraid of some of you, my dear people, in this respect, because this has been, in fact, the case of multitudes, and therefore it may be yours.

I also stand in doubt of some of you, that you have worn off your religious impressions before they ripened to a right issue. This is a very common case in the world, and therefore it may be yours. I am afraid some of you are farther from the kingdom of God to-day, than you were some months or years ago. Formerly you were serious and thoughtful, but now you are light and vain ; formerly you had some clear, affecting convictions of your sin and danger, which made you pensive and uneasy, set you up-

on the use of the means of grace with unusual earnestness and diligence, and made you more watchful against sin and temptation. Had you but persevered in this course, your case would have been very hopeful; nay, you might ere now have been sincere christians, happy in the favour of God, and the joyful expectation of a blessed immortality. But, alas! now you are become more thoughtless and secure, more negligent and careless, more worldly-minded, more bold and venturous as to temptation, and particularly ensnaring company; less sensible of your sin and danger, less afraid of the divine displeasure, less solicitous for a Saviour, and less affected with eternal things. I stand in doubt of you that this is the case of some of you; and if it be, it is very dismal: *the last state of that man is worse than the first.* Perhaps your religious impressions went so far, that yourselves and others too began to number you in the list of sincere converts. But, alas! you have relapsed, and now your case is dismally dark; it is very doubtful whether ever you had one spark of true piety. Like the Galatians you did once run well; but the corruptions of your own hearts, the cares of the world, the influence of bad company, and the temptations of the devil, have hindered you, and made you turn back, and now you are got into the easy, slippery, descending road of apostasy; from whence, as from a precipice, your feet will, ere long, slide, and let you fall into the fiery gulf below. You are every day running farther and farther from God and heaven, and so much nearer to the chambers of eternal death. Your consciences, by repeated violences, will be stunned into insensibility, your hearts will harden more and more, like moistened clay in the sun. Your corruptions are gaining the victory in repeated conflicts, will grow more strong and insolent, like veteran troops inured to war and conquest. In short, your case grows every day more and more discouraging; and I stand in doubt of you, lest you should never recover your religious impressions, nor enter into the kingdom of God.

I am also in doubt of some of you, that the world has your hearts: your thoughts seem to be engrossed by it, and your affections fixed upon it as your supreme good, and hence your mouth is full of it; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Now if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Covetousness is idolatry; and you know that no idolater has eternal life. I fear this is the character of some of you.

Is there not also reason to doubt of some of you, from the discoveries you give of an unchristian spirit towards mankind? You may perhaps make a specious profession of religion, and punctually attend upon divine ordinances; but do you not discover insufferable pride, and unchristian resentment, and an unforgiving spirit under injuries, a disposition to over reach and take the advantage in your dealings? Such a temper, when predominant, is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of christianity, and proves you entirely destitute of it; and the appearances of the prevalence of such a temper render your case very suspicious.

Let me add farther,* Suppose that in this day of blood and slaughter, when the Lord of Hosts calls you to weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth; when the wounds of your bleeding country, and the streams of blood that are running by sea and land, call for your sorrowful sympathy; when your everlasting state stands in a dreadful suspense, and you know not whether heaven or hell will be your residence, if you should die this night; or, when the evidence lies against you, and you have good proof, that you are utterly unprepared for eternity in your present condition, when the spirit of God seems withdrawn from us; and consequently but few are pressing into the kingdom of God, and general languor and inefficacy run through the ministrations of the gospel; when your conduct may encourage others to run into extravagancies, and forget God and their souls, as well as throw yourselves causelessly into the way of temptation, and cherish that levity of mind which directly tends to wear off your religious impressions; when at a time in which you pretend to commemorate the birth of the holy Jesus, who came to destroy the works of the devil and the flesh, and particularly revellings, and to make you sober and watchful to prayer, and to shun all appearances of evil; when in your transition from the old year to the new, in which you may die, and never see the close of it; and when one would think it would better become you solemnly to recollect how you have spent the year past, and devote yourselves to God for the future with new vows and resolutions;—Suppose, I say, that at such a time, and in such circumstances, you indulge yourselves in feasting and carousing, that perhaps you prosecute and chase the diversion from house to house, in order to prolong it, and guard against the returns of

* This Sermon is dated at Hanover, January 8, 1758.

serious, retired and thoughtful hours; as if laughing, dancing and frolic, were proper expressions of gratitude for the birth of a Saviour, and as if there was nothing in time or eternity of sufficient moment to make you serious, and check your growing levity—What shall I say of such a practice? The mildest thing I can say is, that I stand in doubt of you, who promote, or willingly tolerate, or join in such entertainments. I have no business at present to determine, whether music, dancing and feasting, be lawful in themselves. Granting them to be as lawful as you could wish, I am sure that, at such a time, and in the circumstances that generally attend them, they are utterly unlawful to every christian, and have a natural tendency to banish all serious religion from among us. You are but little acquainted with me if you think I say this as a sour ascetic, or an enemy to the lawful pleasures of mankind, or that I place religion in morose, mopish, melancholy austerities. Such of you as are acquainted with me must know the contrary. But after all I must declare, I shall have very little hopes of the success of the gospel among you, if once I should have a congregation of dancing, frolicing christians. Alas! they are not like to dance and frolic themselves into heaven.—It is with great reluctance I touch upon such a subject, though with a gentle hand; but duty commands, and I must obey: and I wish the admonition may be so effectual, as to prevent all occasion to repeat it in time to come.

Thus I have delineated sundry dubious characters, and now I leave you to judge whether there be not many such among you. Examine yourselves thoroughly, that you may have the judgment of God in your favour; for by that you must stand or fall.

Some of you, perhaps, may think it strange I have omitted so many characters that are frequent among us. I have said nothing of the profane sinner, the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the thief, the knave confessed: I have said nothing of the infidel and scoffer, who affect to disbelieve the religion of Jesus, and relapse into heathenism; and who openly make a mock of things sacred: I have said nothing of the careless creature, who lives in the general neglect of even the forms of religion: I have said nothing of the stupid, thoughtless creature, who never troubles his head, as he may affect to speak, about religion; and whose heart has hardly ever received any impressions from it; but who lives like a brute, merely for the purposes of the present life: I have said nothing of such as these, because they do not

come under the class of doubtful characters ; I have no doubt at all about such ; I am sure they are utterly destitute of all true religion, and must perish forever, if they continue in their present condition. If you would know how I come to be sure as to them, I answer, Because I believe my reason and my Bible ; for both put the character and the doom of such beyond all doubt. Common sense is sufficient to convince me, that such are unholy impenitent sinners ; and I am sure, both from reason and revelation, that an unholy impenitent sinner, while such, can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let such as harbour a wider charity for them, point out the grounds of it. Indeed there is one thing lamentably doubtful as to such ; it is very doubtful whether ever their present condition will be changed for the better. The most promising period of life is over with them ; and even in that period they continued impenitent under all the means of grace they enjoyed ; and is it not more likely that they will continue so in time to come ? O ! that they would take the alarm, and lay their danger to heart in time, that they may use proper means for their deliverance !

Nothing can turn the full evidence against them in their favour, and nothing can render the doubtful case of the former class clear and satisfactory, but the formation of Christ within them. This alone can put it beyond all doubt that they are christians indeed, and prove their sure title to everlasting happiness. This shall be the subject of the remainder of this discourse.

Here you would ask me, I suppose, what it is to have Christ formed within us ?

I have already told you briefly, that it signifies our being made conformable to him in heart and life, or having his holy image stamped upon our hearts. This is essential to the character of every true christian. *Christ dwells in the heart of such by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. *and if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Rom. viii. 9. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked*, saith St. John, 1 John ii. 6. *Let the same mind be in you*, saith St. Paul, *which was also in Christ Jesus*, Phil. ii. 5. *Whom he foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Rom. viii. 29. The temper of a christian has such a resemblance to Christ's, that it may be called Christ in embryo, spiritually formed within us. It is indeed infinitely short of the all perfect original, but yet it is a prevailing temper, and habitually the governing principle of the

soul. That filial temper towards God, that humble veneration and submission, that ardent devotion, that strict regard to all the duties of religion, that self-denial, humility, meekness and patience, that heavenly-mindedness and noble superiority to the world, that generous charity, benevolence and mercy to mankind, that ardent zeal and diligence to do good, that temperance and sobriety which shone in the blessed Jesus with a divine incomparable splendour; these and the like graces and virtues shine, though with feebler rays, in all his followers. They have their infirmities indeed, many and great infirmities; but not such as are inconsistent with the habitual prevalency of this Christ-like disposition. You may make what excuses you please, but this is an eternal truth, that unless you have a real resemblance to the holy Jesus, you are not his genuine disciples. Pray examine critically into this point. Have you a right to take your name Christian from Christ, by reason of your conformity to him?

Again, if Christ be formed in your hearts, he lives there. The heavenly embryo is not yet complete, not yet ripe for birth into the heavenly world, but it is quickened. I mean, those virtues and graces above mentioned are not dead, inactive principles within you, but they operate, they shew themselves alive by action, they are the governing principles of your practice. You are not like him in heart, unless you are like him in life too; and if your life be conformed to his, it will plainly distinguish you from the world, while it continues so wicked. If you are like to him, you will certainly be very unlike to the generality of mankind; and they will acknowledge the difference, and point you out, and hate you, as not belonging to them. They will stare at you as an odd unfashionable stranger, and wonder you do not copy their example.

If ye were of the world, says Christ, *the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 19.

I hope you now know what it is to have Christ formed within you. And in what heart among you is this holy thing conceived and growing? Where are the followers of Jesus? Surely they are not so like the men of the world, the followers of sin and Satan, as to be undistinguishable. O! how many impostors does this inquiry discover, false pretenders to christianity, who are the very reverse of its great Founder! And as many of you as continue unlike to Him now in holiness, must continue unlike to him

orever in happiness. All Christ's heavenly companions are Christ-like ; they bear his image and superscription.

Before I dismiss this head I must observe, that the production of this divine infant, if I may so call it, in the heart, is entirely the work of the holy Spirit. It is not the growth of nature, but a creation by divine power. It is the hand of God that draws the lineaments of this image upon the heart, though he makes use of the gospel and a variety of means as his pencil.

But you would inquire farther, " In what manner does this divine agent work ; or how is Christ formed in the hearts of his people ?"

I answer, The heart of man has a quick sensation. Nothing can be done there without its perceiving it, much less can Christ be formed there, while it is wholly insensible of the operation. There is indeed a great variety in the circumstances, but the substance of the work is the same in all adults. Therefore, if ever you have been the subjects of it, you have been sensible of the following particulars.

1. You have been made deeply sensible of your being entirely destitute of this divine image. Your hearts have appeared to you as a huge, shapeless mass of corruption, without one ingredient of true goodness, amidst all the flattering appearances of it. In confidence of this discovery your high conceit of yourselves was mortified, your airs of pride and self-consequence lowered, and you saw yourselves utterly unfit for heaven, that region of purity, and ready to fall, as it were, by your own weight, into hell, that sink of all the pollutions of the moral world. This is the first step towards the formation of Christ in the soul. And have you ever gone thus far ? If not, you may be sure you have never gone farther.

2. You have hereupon set yourselves in earnest to the use of the means appointed for the renovation of your nature. Prayer, hearing the gospel, and other divine ordinances, were no more lifeless, customary formalities to you ; but you exerted all the vigour of your souls in them. You also guarded against every thing that tended to cherish your depraved disposition, and hinder the formation of Christ within you. Then you durst not play with temptation, nor venture within its reach. This is the second step in the process. And have you ever gone thus far ? If not, you have never gone farther ; and if you have never gone farther, you can never reach the kingdom of God in your present condition.

3. You have been made sensible of your own weakness, and the inefficacy of all the means you could use to produce the divine image upon your hearts; and that nothing but the divine hand could draw it there. When you first begun your endeavours you had high hopes you would do great things; but, after hard strivings and strugglings, after many prayers and tears, after much reading, hearing and meditation, you found no great effect followed; nay, the corruption of your heart appeared more and more, and hence you concluded you were growing worse and worse. Thus the blessed Spirit convinced you of your own weakness, and the necessity of his influence to work this divine change. He cleared away the rubbish of pride and self-righteousness from your hearts, in order to prepare them, as a clean canvass, to receive the image of Christ. And have you ever been thus humbled and mortified? Have you ever been reduced into this medicinal self-despair? It is the humble heart alone that is susceptive of the image of the meek and lowly Jesus. Pride can never receive its lineaments, nor can it be carved on an insensible stone.

4. Hereupon the holy Spirit enlightened your minds to view the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the method of salvation revealed in the gospel. The bright beams of the divine perfections shining in that way of salvation, the attractive beauties of holiness, and all the wonders of the gospel, struck your minds with delightful astonishment: and you viewed them in a light unknown before. Hereupon you were enabled to cast your guilty, corrupt, helpless souls upon Jesus Christ, whom you saw to be a glorious, all sufficient Saviour; and with all your hearts you embraced the way of salvation through his mediation. The view of his glory proved transformative: while you were contemplating the object, you received its likeness; the rays of glory beaming upon you, as it were, rendered your hearts transparent, and the beauties of holiness were stamped upon them. Thus St Paul represents the matter, *We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord in the gospel, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus your hearts retained the image of his glory, like the face of Moses after he had been conversing with God in the Mount. You contracted the temper of Jesus Christ, and imbibed his spirit: he was formed in your hearts, and began to live and act there. The life you lived in the flesh,

you lived by the faith of the Son of God. Now your minds took a new turn, and your life a new cast; and the difference began to appear even to the world. Not knowing the divine original, they knew not whose image you bore. *Therefore the world knoweth us not*, saith St. John, *because it knew him not*, 1 John iii. 1. This, however, they knew, that you did not resemble them; therefore they looked upon you as odd sort of creatures, whose tempers and manners were as different from theirs as if you were foreigners: you soon became as speckled birds among them, and they were weary of your society, and you of theirs. Brethren, have you ever been the subjects of this divine operation? Has Christ ever been thus formed in your hearts? I stand in doubt of some of you, though, blessed be God, there are others who give good grounds for a charitable hope concerning them, by their apparent likeness to Christ.

5. If Christ has ever been formed in you, it is your persevering endeavour to improve and perfect this divine image. You long and labour to be fully conformed to him, and, as it were, to catch his air, his manner and spirit, in every thought, in every word, and in every action. As far as you are unlike to him, so far you appear deformed and loathsome to yourselves. While you feel an unchristian spirit prevail within you, you seem as if you were possessed with the devil. And it is the labour of your life to subdue such a spirit, and to brighten and finish the features of the divine image within you, by repeated touches and re-touches.

By this short view, my brethren, you may be assisted in determining whose image you bear; whether Christ's or Satan's, whether Christ's or the world's, whether Christ's or your own. And let me tell you, if you cannot determine this, you know not but you may be in hell the next hour; for none shall ever find admittance into heaven who are not formed after the image of Christ. The glorious company upon Mount Sion are all followers of the Lamb: they are like him, for they see him as he is. A soul unlike to him would be a monster there; a native of hell broke into heaven; a wolf among lambs; a devil among angels. And can you hope for admission there, while you are unlike him? The two grand apartments of the eternal world are under two opposite heads; the holy Jesus presides in the one—and the Prince of devils, the prime offender and father of sin, in the other. Both apartments are thick settled with colonies from our world; and the inhabitants of both are like their respective heads. Therefore

if ye resemble the Prince of Heaven, with him you shall dwell forever ; but if you resemble the tyrant of hell, you must forever be his miserable vassals. Therefore push home the inquiry, is Christ formed in my heart, or is he not ?

If he be, then rejoice in it, as a sure earnest of the heavenly inheritance. None ever went to hell that carried the image of Christ upon their hearts ; but the heavenly regions are peopled with such. His image is the grand passport into that country, a passport that was never disputed ; and, if you bear it, the celestial gates will be flung wide open for your reception, and your human and angelic brethren, who have the same looks, the same manner, the same spirit, will all hail your arrival, and shout your welcome ; will own you as their kindred, from your visible resemblance to them ; and you will immediately and naturally commence a familiarity with them, from the conformity of your dispositions. The Father of all will also own the dear image of his Son, and the blessed Jesus will acknowledge his own image, and confess the relation. Blessed moment ! when wilt thou arrive, when all the followers of the Lamb shall appear upon Mount Sion, in his full likeness, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ? When no stranger of another countenance and another spirit shall mingle among them, but be all cast in the same mould, and all be clothed in uniform, with the beauties of holiness, and the robes of salvation ! O ! my brethren, must not your eager hearts spring forward to meet that day !

But amid all the joy which that transporting prospect affords, it must humble you to think, that though Christ be really formed in your hearts, it is but very imperfectly, as an unfinished embryo. His image as yet is but very faint ; you still carry the traces of some infernal features about you. Let this consideration constrain you to put yourselves daily under the operation of the blessed Spirit, till he finish the heavenly picture by repeated touches, and diligently attend upon all the means which he is pleased to use as his pencil. Guard against every thing that may deform the divine draught, or delay its perfection. Go on in this way, and the glorious picture will daily catch more and more the likeness of the divine original, and soon come to complete perfection.

But I must speak a concluding word to such of you in whom Christ has never yet been formed. Pray turn your eyes upon yourselves, and survey your own deformity. Do not you see the image of the devil upon you ? Have you not forgotten God, and refused to love him, like a devil ? Have you not loved and prac-

tised sin like a devil ? or have you not wallowed in sensual pleasures, and confined all your concern to the present life, like a beast, and thus made yourselves the most horrid monsters, half beast, half devil ? And can you love yourselves while this is your character ? Can you flatter yourselves such can be admitted into heaven ?

Since it is possible your deformed spirits may yet receive the image of Christ, will you not use all possible means for that purpose, while there is hope ? This day begin the attempt, resolve and labour to become new men in this new year.

But alas ! exhortation is but feeble breath, that vanishes into air between my lips and your ears ; something is wanting to give it force and efficacy. We have the gospel, we have preaching, we have all the means of salvation ; but something is wanting to give them life, to make them efficacious, and bear them home upon the hearts of sinners with that almighty energy which they have sometimes had. Something, alas ! is wanting for this purpose : and what is it ? It is Thou, eternal Spirit ! Thou, the Author of all good in the hearts of the children of men : thou, the only former of Christ within ; thou art absent, and without thee neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth ; they are all nothing together. Come, thou life of souls ! thou spirit of the gospel ! thou quickener of ordinances ! thou assistant of poor ministers ! thou opener of their hearers' hearts ! Come, visit this congregation. Come to-day : O ! come this moment ! and Christ shall be formed in us, the hope and the earnest of glory !

Sermon 46.

THE WONDERFUL COMPASSIONS OF CHRIST TO THE GREATEST SINNERS.

MATT XXIII. 37.—*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !*

THERE is not, perhaps, a chapter in the whole Bible so full of such repeated denunciations of the most tremendous woes as this. Certainly there is none like it, among all the discourses of

Christ, left upon record. Here the gentle Jesus, the inoffensive Lamb of God, treats the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees with the most pungent severity. Wo, wo, wo, breaks from his lips like repeated claps of thunder. He exposes them with an asperity and indignation not usual in his mild addresses. He repeatedly calls them hypocrites, fools, and blind, blind guides, whited sepulchres, children of hell, serpents, a generation of vipers, who could not escape the damnation of hell. But in my text he melts into tenderness, even in this vein of terror, and appears the same compassionate, gentle Saviour we are wont to find him. His most terrible denunciations were friendly warnings, calculated to reform, and not to destroy. And while denouncing the most terrible woes against Jerusalem, in an abrupt flow of passion he breaks out into the most moving lamentation over her ; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !*

This is one of those tender cases which requires a familiar and moving, rather than a grand illustration ; and that which Jesus has here chosen is one of the most tender, familiar and moving that could be devised. *How often would I have gathered thee, O Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.*—As much as to say, " As the parent-bird, when she sees some bird of prey hovering over her helpless young, gives them the signal, which nature teaches them to understand, and spreads her wings to protect them, resolved to become a prey herself rather than her tender brood ; or, as she shelters them from the rain and cold, and cherishes them under her friendly feathers, so, says the compassionate Redeemer ; so, O Jerusalem ! I see thy children, like heedless chickens, in the most imminent danger ; I see the judgments of God hovering over them ; I see the Roman eagle ready to seize them as its prey ; I see storms of vengeance ready to fall upon them ; and how often have I invited them to fly to me for shelter, and give them the signal of their danger ! how often have I spread the wings of my protection to cover them, and keep them warm and safe as in my bosom ! But, O lamentable ! O ! astonishing ! ye would not ! I was willing, but ye would not ! The silly chickens, taught by nature, understand the signal of approaching danger, and immediately fly for shelter ; but ye, more silly and presumptuous, would not regard my

warnings ; would not believe your danger, nor fly to me for protection, though often, O how often, warned and invited !"

His compassion will appear the more surprising, if we consider the object of it. " Jerusalem ! Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, though upon the kind design of reforming and saving thee, and who wilt, in a few days, crucify that Saviour who now laments thy doom, how often would he have gathered even thy ungrateful children and received them under his protection, with an affection and tenderness, like the instinctive fondness and solicitude of the mother-hen for her brood ! Here is divine compassion indeed, that extends itself even to his enemies, to his murderers ! Strange ! that such generous benevolence should meet with an ungrateful repulse ! that the provoked Sovereign should be willing to receive his rebellious subjects into protection, but that they should be unwilling to fly to him for it !"

The important truths which my text suggests are such as these : —That sinners while from under the protection of Jesus Christ, are in a very dangerous situation—that they may obtain safety by putting themselves under his protection—that he is willing to receive the greatest sinners under his protection—that he has often used means to prevail upon them to fly to him, that they may be safe—that notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him, and put themselves under his protection—that this unwillingness of theirs is the real cause of their destruction—that this unwillingness is an instance of the most irrational and brutal stupidity—and, that it is very affecting and lamentable.

1. The text implies, that sinners, while from under the protection of Jesus Christ, are in a very dangerous situation. As the hen does not give the signal of danger, nor spread her wings to shelter her young, except when she sees danger approaching, so the Lord Jesus would not call sinners to fly to him for protection, were they not in real danger. Sinners, you are in danger from the curse of the divine law, which is in full force against you, while you have no interest in the righteousness of Christ, which alone can answer its demands : You are in danger from the dread arrest of divine justice, which guards the sacred rights of the divine government, and will avenge itself upon you for all the insults you have offered it : You are in danger from the various judgments of God, who is angry with you every day, and whose judgments are hovering over you, and ready to seize you, like

hungry birds of prey : You are in danger from your own vile corruptions, which may hurry you into such courses as may be inconvenient, or, perhaps, ruinous to you in this world, may harden you in impenitence, and at length destroy you forever : You are in danger from your own conscience, which would be your best friend ; but it is now ready to rise up in arms against you, and, like an insatiable vulture, prey upon your hearts forever : You are in danger from the arrest of death, which is ready every moment to stretch out its mortal hand, and seize you : You are in danger from the malice and power of devils, who, like hungry lions, are ready to snatch away your souls, as their helpless prey. In short, you are surrounded with dangers on every hand, and dangers rise still more thick and dreadful before you. You are not sure of an hour's enjoyment of one comfort : nay, you are not sure there is so much as one moment betwixt you and all the miseries of the damned This minute you are upon earth, thoughtless, secure and gay ; but the next may be—I tremble to tell you where—in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, tormented in flames. Yes, sinners, one flying moment may strip you entirely naked of all the enjoyments of earth, cut you off from all hope of heaven, and ingulf you in remediless despair. Some of you, whose very case this is, will not, probably, believe me, nor take the alarm. But here, alas ! lies your principal danger. If you would take warning in time, you might escape ; but you will not believe there is danger until it becomes inevitable —Had Lot's sons-in-law taken warning from him, they might have escaped ; but they saw no sensible appearances of the impending judgment, and, therefore, they continued blindly secure, regarded the good old man as a mocker, and therefore, perished in Sodom. Had Jerusalem been apprehensive of its danger in time, it might have flourished to this day ; but it would not be warned, and, therefore, became a ruinous heap : and this will be your doom, sinners, unless you be apprehensive of it before it breaks upon you like a whirlwind. Indeed it may make one sad to think how common this danger is, and how little it is apprehended, to see crowds thoughtless and merry on the brink of ruin ; secure and careless while hanging over the infernal pit by the frail thread of life. This is sad ; but, alas ! it is a common case in the world, and I am afraid, it is too common among you, my hearers. And whither shall you fly for safety ? Is the danger inevitable ? If so, where is the friendly arm that can guard you ? where the wing that can

shelter you from those judgments that are hovering over you, like ravenous birds, to make a prey of you? Blessed be God, I can shew you a place of safety; for,

2. The text implies, that if sinners fly to Christ, and put themselves under his protection, they shall obtain safety.

The beautiful allusion to the protection a hen affords her young under the shelter of her wings, implies thus much, as we may learn from the meaning of the same allusion in other places. So in that beautiful passage, Psalm xci. 1—4. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortress—Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler—He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust;* that is, he shall protect thee in safety, and thou shalt trust in his guardian care. This is David's meaning, when he prays, *Lord, hide me under the shadow of thy wings.* Psalm xvii. 8. And when he resolves, *yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be over-past;* just as the hen's helpless brood hide under her wings until the storm be blown over, or the bird of prey has disappeared. Psalm lvii. 1. *I will trust*, says he, *in the covert of thy wings.* Ps. lxi. 4. *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* Ps. lxiii. 7.*

How great and seemingly inevitable your dangers; yet, if you place yourselves under the protection of Jesus Christ, you are safe forever; safe from the deluges of divine wrath, that are ready to rush down upon you; safe from the sword of justice, and the thunders of Sinai; safe from the intestine insurrections of your own conscience, and from the power and malice of infernal spirits; safe from the oppression of sin, and you shall be gloriously triumphant over death itself, the king of terrors. These may disturb and alarm you, they may give you a slight wound, and put you in great terror; but none of them can do you a lasting, remediless injury; nay, the very injuries you may receive from them in this life, will, in the issue, turn out to your advantage, and become real blessings to you. If ye are Christ's, then, saith the apostle, *all things are yours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.* 1 Cor.

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* See the same metaphor, used in much the same sense, in Psalm xxxvi. 7. Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11. though, in the two last places, it includes conduct as well as protection.

iii. 21. that is, you have a kind of property in all things that you have any connection with, so that they shall work together for your good, as if they were all your own, by a private right. Brethren, if we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, the sword of divine justice cannot reach us. All its demands are answered, and justice itself becomes our friend. If we are sheltered under the wings of his guardian care, the most threatening dangers of time or eternity cannot affect us with real injury. How happy then, how safe are such of you as have put yourselves under his protection! Now every blessing is yours, and nothing can do you a real injury. You shall never fall a prey to your various enemies, but shall at length obtain an illustrious victory over them all, through the blood of the Lamb. To you I may apply those sublime words of Moses, *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone does and will lead you*, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. defend you, cherish you, and bear you along to your eternal home. You have, therefore, reason, with David, amidst all the peculiar dangers of this life, to rejoice under the shadow of his wings. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and you have fled to it, and are safe. Amidst all your fears and terrors, have you not some secure and delightful hours, when you, as it were, feel yourselves gathered under the wings of your Redeemer? In such hours, do not even such weaklings as you dare to brave all your enemies, and bid defiance to earth and hell? O how happy, how secure is your situation!

But here a grand question rises in the minds of some of you, "How may I know whether I have fled to Jesus for protection? How may I know whether I have placed myself under his guardian wings?" This is a question of the utmost importance: and I must offer a word or two in answer to it. Observe then, if ever you have fled to Jesus for safety, you have been made deeply sensible of your danger. If ever you have sought shelter under his wings, you have seen your sins, the curses of the law, and the powers of hell, as it were, hovering over you, and ready to seize and devour you as their prey. You have also been made deeply sensible, that Jesus alone was able to save you. You found you could not shelter yourselves under the covert of your own righteousness, and were constrained to give up all hopes of saving yourselves by any thing you could do in your own strength.

Hereupon, as perishing, helpless creatures, you have cast yourselves entirely upon the protection of Jesus Christ, and put your souls into his hands, to be saved by him in his own way: And you have also submitted freely to his authority, willing to be ruled and disposed of entirely according to his pleasure. These few things must suffice to determine this grand inquiry; and I hope you will make use of them for that purpose: If they help you to discover, that you have fled to Jesus for refuge, rejoice in your happy lot, and let your mouths be filled with praise. But alas! are there not some of you that have made the contrary discovery, and, consequently, that you are exposed to all the dreadful dangers of a sinner without Christ? And is there no place of safety for you? Yes, under those wings where believers have sheltered themselves. In Jesus Christ there is safety, if you fly to him: but you may perhaps inquire, "What encouragement have I to fly to him? I, who am so vile a sinner; I, who have nothing at all to recommend me! Can I hope that he will stretch out the wings of his mercy, and receive me into protection?" Yes, poor trembling creature, even you may venture; for remember what my text farther implies, viz.

3. That the compassionate Jesus is willing to receive the very greatest sinner under his protection. Can you question this, after this moving lamentation of his over Jerusalem! Jerusalem, that killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her, though upon messages of grace; Jerusalem, upon whom should come all the righteous blood of the prophets, through a length of near 4000 years, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias; Jerusalem, the den of those murderers, who, he well knew, would in a few days imbrue their hands in his own blood; Jerusalem, that had abused so many mercies, been incorrigible under so many chastisements, deaf to so many invitations; yet, of this very city, the compassionate Saviour says, *How often would I have gathered thy children* under the wings of my protection: thy children, obstinate and ungrateful as they are! O what gracious encouragement is here to the greatest sinners among us! Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; the same compassionate, all sufficient Saviour. He did not lose his pity for Jerusalem after he had suffered death by her bloody hands; but after his resurrection he orders his apostles to make one trial more with her obstinate children: *Go*, says he, *and preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, Luke xxiv. 41. as much as to

say, "Though Jerusalem be the ungrateful city, where so much pains have been taken in vain, and where I have just been crucified with cruel hands, yet do not give them up; try once more to gather them under my wings; yea, let them have the very first offer of grace under this new dispensation; make the first offer of pardon through my blood to the wretches that shed my blood; invite them to me as a Saviour, who nailed me to the cross as a malefactor and a slave." O what melting overpowering mercy! What overflowing and free grace are here! This exemplifies his own declaration, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:* and sinners of the vilest characters are welcome to him. He took care, at the first introduction of the gospel, to select some of the most daring sinners, and make them the monuments of his grace to all ages, that their history might give the strongest assurance of his grace to sinners of the like character, from that time to the end of the world. Such an instance was the famous St. Paul. *This is a faithful saying*, says he; a saying that may be depended upon, *and worthy of all acceptation;* worthy to be received as true, and embraced with joy by all the sons of men, *that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of which I am the chief*, 1 Tim. i. 15. This chieftain, this king of sinners, was made a happy subject of Jesus Christ. And *for this cause*, says he, *I obtained mercy, that in me first, or in me the chief,** *Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him.* Blessed be God, there are many such instances now in heaven, in the glorious company of angels! "There, as one observes, is murderous and idolatrous Manasseh among the true worshippers of God; there is oppressing Zaccheus among the spirits of just men made perfect; there is Mary Magdalen, possessed by seven devils, among the saints of the Most High, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. In a word, there are the betrayers and murderers of our blessed Lord and Saviour, receiving eternal life and happiness from that precious blood which their own guilty hands did shed."† And what farth-

* The same word in the same sense is thus translated two or three words before—ὧν [scil. ἁμαρτωλῶν] πρῶτός εἰμι ἐγω—and then follows—ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

† Dr. Grosvenor, in a sermon, intitled, "The Temper of Jesus Christ towards his Enemies, and his Grace to the chief of Sinners, in his commanding the Gospel to begin at Jerusalem," has the following very lively and striking passage:—"It is very affecting that the first offers of grace

er arguments need I produce of the willingness of Jesus Christ to receive the vilest sinner among you, upon your coming to him? I might prove the same joyful truth from his repeated declarations, from his indefinite invitations, and especially from that kind assurance which has kept many a soul from sinking: *him that*

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should be made to those who, of all people in the world, had done it the most despite! That the heavenly gift should be tendered to those first who least deserved it: not that any can deserve it at all, for then it were not grace; but they of all people had most deserved the contrary! That they, who had abused Christ to a degree beyond the most pitiful description, should yet lie uppermost in his care, and stand foremost in his pity, and find so much mercy from one to whom they showed none at all!

"One would rather have expected the apostles should have received another kind of charge, and that Christ should have said, Let repentance and remission of sins be preached, but carry in not to Jerusalem, that wicked city, that has been the slaughter-house of my prophets, whom I have often sent. After them I sent John the Baptist, a burning and a shining light; him they killed in prison. Last of all, I myself, the Son came also; and me, with wicked hands, they have crucified and slain. They may do the same by you; the disciple is not like to be better (treated) than his Lord: let not the gospel enter those gates, through which they led me, its author, to crucifixion.

"I have been preaching there myself these three years, I have mingled my tears with my sermons, I have supported my pretensions and character from the scriptures of Moses and the prophets, I have confirmed them by divine miracles, and sealed all with my blood, yet they would not give ear: *O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!* all that I have left for thee now is, what I have before dropt over thee, viz. a compassionate tear and wish, *that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belonged to thy peace! but now they are hid from thy eyes;* and so let them remain; for I charge you, my apostles, to *preach repentance and remission of sins* to all other nations, but come not near that wicked city.

"But God's thoughts are not as ours, neither are his ways as our ways; but as far as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways above ours. Our way is, to make the chief offenders examples of justice, to avenge ourselves upon those who have done us personal injury and wrong; but Christ chooses out these to make examples of mercy, and commands the first offer of eternal life to be made to them, and all the world are to wait till they have had the first refusal of the gospel-salvation.

"As if our Lord had said, It is true my sufferings are an universal remedy, and I have given my life a ransom for many, that the Gentiles afar off might be brought nigh, and all the ends of the earth might see the salvation of God, and therefore *go into all nations* and offer this salvation as you go; but, lest the poor house of Israel should think themselves abandoned to despair, the seed of Abraham, mine ancient friend, as cruel and unkind as they have been, go, make them the first offer of grace, let them have the first refusal of gospel mercy; let them that struck the rock, drink first of its refreshing streams; and they that drew my blood, be welcome to its healing virtue.

"Tell them, that as I was sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, so, if they will be gathered, I will be their Shepherd still. Though they despised my tears, which I shed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, tell them it was for their sakes I shed both, that by my tears I might soften their hearts towards God, and by my blood I might reconcile God to them.

"Tell them I live; and because I am alive again, my death shall not be their damnation; nor is my murder an unpardonable sin, but that the

cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. John vi. 37. But this argument from matters of fact is sufficient. Therefore come, sinners, fly to Jesus, however deep your guilt. Had you been murderers of fathers, or murderers of mothers ; nay, had you come hither this day with hands reeking in the blood of the Son of God, yet, if you repent and believe, he is willing to receive you under the shadow of his wings. I may therefore invite you in the language of the following lines :*

Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves ;
He spreads his arms t' embrace you all ,
Sinners alone his grace receives.
Come, all ye Magdalens in lust :
Ye ruffians fell, in murders old,
Repent and live ; despair and trust !
Jesus for you to death was sold.
Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
Groaning beneath your load of sin !
His bleeding heart shall make you room,
His wounded side shall take you in.
He calls you all, invites you home :
Come, O my guilty brethren, come !

To encourage you the more, and even to constrain you, consider what my text implies farther, viz.

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blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, even the sin by which that blood was drawn.

" Tell them, you have seen the prints of the nails upon my hands and feet, and the wound of the spear in my side, and that those marks of their cruelty are so far from giving m vindictive thoughts, that every wound they have given me speaks in their behalf, pleads with the Father for remission of their sins, and enables me to bestow it ; and by those sufferings which they may be ready to think have exasperated me against them, by those very wounds, court and persuade them to receive the salvation they have procured.

" Nay, if you meet that poor wretch that thrust the spear into my side, tell him, there is another way, a better way of coming to my heart, even my heart's love, if he will repent, *and look upon him whom he has pierced,* and will mourn, I will cherish him in that very bosom he has wounded ; he shall find the blood he shed an ample atonement for the sin of shedding it. And tell him from me, he will put me to more pain and displeasure by refusing this offer of my blood, than when he first drew it forth. In short,

" Though they have gainsayed my doctrine, blasphemed my divinity, and abused and tormented my person, taken away my life, and, what is next valuable to every honest man, endeavoured to murder my reputation too, by making me an impostor, and imputing my miracles to a combination with Beelzebub ; however go to Jerusalem, and by beginning there, show them such a miracle of goodness and grace, that they themselves must confess too good for the Devil to have any hand in, too Godlike for him to be assisting to ; that may convince them of their sin, and at the same time that nothing can be greater than their sin, except this mercy and grace of mine, which, where their sin has abounded, does thus much more abound, beginning at Jerusalem."

* Mr. Wesley.

4. That the Lord Jesus has often used means to prevail upon you to fly to him for safety. What he says to Jerusalem may be applied to you : *how often would I have gathered thy children together !* How often has he given you the signal of danger, that you might fly from it ! how often has he spread out a friendly wing to shelter you ! as often as the law has denounced his curses against you ; as often as the gospel has invited and allured you : as often as conscience has checked and warned you, or prompted you to your duty ; as often as the Holy Spirit has moved upon your hearts, and excited some serious thoughts and good purposes and inclinations : as often as providence has allured you with its profusion of blessings, or chastened you with its afflictive rod ; as often as you have seen a good example, or heard a pious word dropt in conversation ; in short, as often as any means of any kind have been used with you, that had a tendency to make you sensible of your danger, or your need of Jesus Christ, so often has he used means with you to engage you to fly to the shelter of his wings for protection. O ! how frequently, and by what great variety of means, has he called you in this congregation ! This is the very business of one day in seven, when you are called away from the noise and bustle of the world to listen to the voice of his invitation. But this is not the only time when he calls you. While you are at home, or following your business through the rest of the week, you have a Bible, a Providence, a conscience, and the Holy Spirit, still with you ; and these are still urging you to fly to Jesus, though their voice may be disregarded, and lost in the din and confusion of the world around you. The gracious call of a compassionate Saviour has followed you ever since you were capable of hearing it to this day. But alas ! does not the next remark hold true as to some of you, viz.

5. That, notwithstanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him for protection ! It was not of Jerusalem alone that he had reason to say, *I would have gathered you, but ye would not !* I was willing, but ye were unwilling. This is strange indeed, and might seem incredible, were it not a most notorious fact. That the Judge should be willing to pardon, but the criminal unwilling to receive pardon—that the offended Sovereign should be ready to take a perishing rebel under his protection, but the rebel should stand off, and rather perish than fly to him—this is a most astonishing thing ; and it is the hardest thing in the world to convince sinners that this is their conduct towards the Lord Jesus. They

are generally more suspicious of his willingness to save them, than of their own to come to him. Were he but as willing to save them as they are to be saved by him, they think there would be no danger of their salvation; but the case is directly the reverse; the unwillingness lies entirely upon their side. To convince them of this let it be considered, that we are not truly willing to be saved by Christ at all, unless we are willing to be saved by him in his own way, or upon his own terms. We are not willing to be saved, unless the nature of the salvation offered be agreeable to us. Now one principal part of the salvation which we need, and which Christ offers, is deliverance from sin; deliverance from the power, the pleasures, the profits of sin, as well as from the destructive consequences of it in the world to come. And are sinners willing to accept of such a salvation as this from Christ? No, this appears no salvation to them; this seems rather a confinement, a loss, a bereavement. They are willing to indulge themselves in sin, and therefore it is impossible they should in the mean time, be willing to be restrained from it, or deprived of it. This is the thing they struggle against, and to which all the means used with them cannot bring them. To tear their sins from them is to rob them of their pleasures; and they rise up in arms against the attempt. And are these willing to be saved by Christ, who abhor the salvation he offers them? The truth of the matter is, the conduct of sinners in this case is the greatest absurdity: they are willing to be happy, but they are not willing to be holy, in which alone their happiness consists: they are willing to be saved from hell, but they are not willing to be saved from those dispositions which would create a hell within them, even according to the nature of things: they are willing to go to heaven when they can live no longer in this their favourite world; but they are unwilling to be prepared for it in their temper and disposition. An eternity spent in holy exercises would be an eternal drudgery to them, unless they have a relish for holiness. Freedom from sin would be a painful bereavement to them while they take pleasure in sin, and how then could they be happy, even in the very region of happiness, since the sordid pleasures of sin never mingle with those pure rivers of living water? In short, they act as absurdly as if they were willing to recover their health, and yet were unwilling to part with their sickness, or to be restrained from those things which are the causes of it. They are willing to go to heaven, but it is in their own way; that is,

in the way that leads to hell. The only way of salvation, according to the divine appointment, is the way of holiness. Indeed Christ came into the world to save sinners ; but these sinners must be made saints before they can enter into his kingdom ; and he makes them holy in order to be happy. And this is not an arbitrary appointment, but necessary, in the very nature of things : for, as I observed, till they are made holy, it is impossible in the nature of things they should be happy in heaven, because the happiness of heaven consists in the perfection of holiness. To be saved without holiness is as impossible as to be healthy without health, or saved without salvation. Therefore, for God to gratify the sinner, and gratify him in his own way ; that is, in his sins, is an impossibility ; as impossible, as for a physician to heal an obstinate patient in his own way ; that is, to heal him by letting him retain and cherish his disease ; letting him cool a fever with cold water, or drink poison to cure a consumption. God is wise in all his constitutions, and therefore the way of salvation through Christ is agreeable to the nature of things ; it is in itself consistent and possible : and if sinners are not willing to be saved in this possible way, they are not willing, in reality, to be saved at all.

Again, the way of salvation by Christ is all through grace. It is adapted to stain the glory, and mortify the pride of all flesh, and to advance to the mercy of God, and the honour of Christ, without a rival. Now haughty, self-righteous sinners are unwilling to be saved in this humbling, mortifying way, and therefore they are unwilling to be saved by Christ. If they would be saved by him, they must be saved entirely upon the footing of his merit, and not their own ; they must own that they lie at mercy, they must feel themselves self-condemned, they must utterly renounce all dependence upon their own righteousness, and receive every blessing as the free unmerited gift of grace. And it is the hardest thing imaginable to bring a proud sinner so low as this ; but till he is brought thus low, he cannot be saved upon the gospel-plan. Nor is this part of the constitution arbitrary any more than the former. It would be inconsistent with the honour of the great God, the Supreme Magistrate of the universe, and with the dignity of his government, to receive a rebel into favour, on any other footing than that of mere grace. If after sinning so much the sinner still has merit enough to procure a pardon, in whole or in part, or to render it cruel or unjust for God to condemn and

punish him, certainly he must be a being of very great importance indeed ; and sin against God must be a very small evil. To save a sinner in a way that would give any room for such insinuations as these, would be inconsistent with the honour of God and his government ; and therefore the plan he has constituted is a method of grace, of pure rich grace, in all and every part. Now, while sinners are not willing to be saved in this way, they are not willing to be saved at all. Here lies their grand mistake : Because they have a general willingness that Christ should save them from hell, they, therefore, conclude they are really willing to come to him according to the gospel-constitution, whereas there is nothing in the world to which they are more averse. There are many that think, and perhaps declare, they would give ten thousand worlds for Christ, when, in reality, they are not willing to receive him as a free gift : they are not yet brought to that extremity as to fly to him. No, the sinner is brought low indeed before he is brought to this. He is entirely cut off from all hope from every other quarter ; particularly, he sees that he cannot shelter himself any longer under the covert of his own righteousness, but that he will be overwhelmed with a deluge of divine vengeance, unless he hides himself under the wings of Jesus.

I beg you would examine yourselves impartially on this point, my brethren, for here lies the grand delusion that ruins thousands. If you are really willing to fly to Jesus, and be saved by him in his own way, you may be sure he is infinitely more willing than you are ; nay, your willingness is the effect of his, for he first made you so. But, if, when you examine the matter to the bottom, you find, that notwithstanding all your pretensions, you are really unwilling to fly to him, consider your dangerous situation ; for,

6. The text implies, that this unwillingness of sinners is the real cause of their destruction.

Sinners complain of the want of ability : but what is their inability but their unwillingness ? Coming to Christ is an act of the will, and, therefore, to will it heartily, is to perform the act. To be unable to come to him is to be so perverse, so disaffected to Jesus Christ, as not to have power to will to come to him. This, by the way, shews the vanity of that popular excuse, " I am not able to fly to Christ, and therefore it is not my fault if I do not." That is, you are so wicked that you can do no good thing ; you are so disaffected to Jesus Christ that you have no

will, no inclination, to choose him for your Saviour ; you are such an obstinate enemy to him, that you would rather perish than take him for your Friend ; therefore your not coming to him is no crime. Is this consistent reasoning ? Is it not all one, as if a rebel should think to excuse himself by pleading, " I have such an inveterate hatred to my sovereign, that I cannot love him :" Or a robber, " I have such an aversion to honesty, that I cannot possibly help stealing ?" Would not this be an aggravation of the crime rather than an excuse ? Is the invincible strength of your disaffection to Christ, a vindication of it ? Are you the more excuseable, by how much the more you hate him ? Sinners, give up his foolish reasoning, for the matter is too important to be trifled with. Your inability in this case is nothing else but your unwillingness ; and your unwillingness is the effect of nothing else but your disaffection to Jesus Christ ; therefore own that this is the true cause of your destruction.

In short, whatever pleas and excuses you make, you will find at last that your destruction is entirely the effect of your own perverse choice. *Ye will not come unto Christ that ye might have life*, John v. 40, and therefore you must perish without it. This reflection will forever torment you, that you wilfully destroyed yourselves, and were guilty of the most unnatural self-murder. Jesus was willing but you would not. God has even sworn that *he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live.* To you therefore I may properly address that expostulation, *Why will ye die ?* Why will ye ? why do ye most wilfully destroy yourselves ? why do ye ruin yourselves by your own free choice ? why will you die ? you, whom Jesus is willing to save, whom he has so often invited, why will you, above all men in the world, causelessly die by your own act ? Are you capable of so much stupidity ? It is a stupidity that is a dreadful peculiarity of your own, for,

7. Unwillingness to fly to Jesus is the most irrational, and worse than brutal stupidity.

This is implied in my text. No sooner does the hen give the signal of danger, than her little family, taught by instinct to understand the alarm, immediately fly under her wings. " So, says Christ, I gave you the alarm, but you would not regard it ; so I spread out the wing of my guardian care to defend you, but you would not shelter under it." What more than brutal stupidity is this ? In this light, the conduct of sinners is frequently exposed in the sacred writings. *The ox knoweth his owner*, says Isaiah, *and*

the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Isaiah i. 3. *Every one turneth to his course,* says Jeremiah, *as the horse rusheth into the battle; yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people,* more stupid than they, *know not the judgment of the Lord.* Jer. viii. 6, 7. To refuse the offer of eternal salvation, when proposed upon the most reasonable terms—to rush into hell, rather than be saved by the friendly hands of Jesus Christ—to suffer the most terrible execution, rather than accept a free pardon—to reject all the bliss of heaven when freely proposed—to choose the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than an eternity of the most exalted happiness—to resist the calls of redeeming love, and all the friendly efforts of divine grace, to save a sinking soul—is this the conduct of a reasonable creature? No; shew me the brute, if you can, that would act so stupid a part in things that come within the sphere of his capacity. Would it not be better for you to be a cat or dog (to use the language of the Earl of Rochester) than that animal Man, who is so proud of being rational, if you make so irrational a choice? Let me endeavour to make you sensible,

8. And lastly, that this conduct is extremely affecting and lamentable.

It is on this account, that Jesus laments over Jerusalem in such pathetic strains in my text. He knew the truth of the case; his all-seeing eye took it in all its extent, and viewed it in all its circumstances and consequences. And since he, who knew it best, deeply laments it, we may be sure it is lamentable indeed, and it cannot but appear so even to us who know so little of it. An immortal soul lost! lost forever! lost by its own obstinacy! lost amidst the means of salvation! how tragical a case is this?—God dishonoured! Jesus rejected! his love defeated! his blood trampled upon! his spirits grieved! how lamentable is this?—And yet are there not some of you in this lamentable condition in this assembly? It was over such as you that Jesus wept and mourned. And shall he weep alone? Shall not our tears keep time with his, since we are so much more nearly concerned? *O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears,* that we might weep along with the Saviour of men! But, alas! our tears are too much reserved for dying friends, or some less affecting object, while immortal souls perish around us, unpitied, unlamented!

Sermon 47.

THE NATURE OF LOVE TO GOD AND CHRIST OPENED AND ENFORCED.

JOHN XXI. 17. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

THERE is nothing more essential to religion, or of more importance in it, than divine love. Divine love is the sole spring of all acceptable obedience in this life, and the grand pre-requisite for complete happiness in the enjoyment of God in the world to come; and without it, all our religion, all our gifts and improvements, however high and miraculous, are vain.

And as it is of the utmost importance in reality, it is confessed to be so by all mankind, who acknowledge the existence of a Deity. Whatever be the religion, or whatever be the object, still it is universally acknowledged, that love is an essential part of it. And indeed the evidence for this is so very glaring, that it is no wonder mankind have not been able to shut their eyes against it. Religion without love, is as great a contradiction as friendship without love. To worship a God whom we do not love, to adore excellencies which we disaffect, to profess a religion founded by an enemy, this is the greatest absurdity imaginable. Such a religion must appear abominable to God and man.

Now divine love is the subject of my text, which I have chosen for your present meditation; and you see I have not chosen a subject that is trifling in itself, or the disputed peculiarity of a party. You need not, therefore, be under apprehensions, that I would proselyte you to any thing but the sincere love of God and Jesus Christ. However, I would not have you judge of my design by my verbal declarations, but by the apparent tendency of my discourse, of which you will be able to form a judgment when I have done.—Therefore entertain no prejudices or suspicions till you see reason, lest you deprive yourselves of that benefit you might otherwise receive from your present attendance.

There is so little solicitous inquiry among men concerning the sincerity of their love to God, that it would seem self-evident, and beyond all dispute.—Whatever sins they indulge themselves in, however much they practically neglect God and religion, yet still they insist upon it, they love him sincerely. This piece of merit they all claim, as belonging to them beyond dispute. But is divine love indeed a thing so common, so universal? We read that *the carnal mind is enmity against God.* Rom. viii. 7. And is there no such thing as a carnal mind now to be found upon earth? We are told of some that were *haters of God.* Rom. i. 30.—*enemies in their minds by wicked works.* Col. i. 21. And are there none such to be found among us? The heart-searching Jesus, while conversant among mortals, told the Jews, who made so great a profession of their love to God, and suspected their own sincerity as little as any of us, *I know you, that you have not the love of God in you* John v. 42. And were he now to pass sentence upon us, would he not make the same declaration with regard to sundry of us, who, perhaps, are least apprehensive of it? Is it a needless thing for us to enter into a serious conference with our own hearts, and ask them, "Do I indeed love the ever blessed God, and the only Saviour? Will my love stand the test? What are its properties and effects?" Is this, my brethren, a superfluous or impertinent inquiry? I am sure it did not seem so to Christ who put Peter to the trial upon this point no less than thrice.

Our Lord made a meal with his disciples, to convince them of the reality of his body after his resurrection. When it was finished, he turns to Peter, and asks him a very serious question, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?* The very proposal of the question seems to suppose that Peter had given some reason to suspect his love to him, as he had really done, a few days before, by denying him thrice, with shocking aggravations; and with this reference the inquiry was very cutting to Peter, and no doubt made him think thus with himself: "Ah! it is no wonder my Lord should call my love in question, who so lately most ungratefully denied him." The question is put to him openly, before the whole company, which might perhaps increase his confusion; but it was prudently ordered, that he might declare his love to Jesus as openly as he had denied him, and that his brethren might be satisfied of his sincerity, and recovery from his late fall.

The first form of the question implies a comparison: *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?* that is, more than

these thy fellow-disciples ? " It is not long since, Peter, that thou didst declare, Though all should forsake thee, yet will not I ; though all my fellow-disciples should prove treacherous, yet I am determined to adhere to thee, come what will ; and art thou still of the same mind ?" Peter modestly replies, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee* : as much as to say, " Lord, I own that I have fallen more foully than any of my brethren, and I dare not say I love thee more than they do : I dare say nothing of the high degree of my love, in comparison with others ; but, Lord, I must assert the sincerity of my love, weak as it is, and I humbly adventure to appeal to thee, who knowest all things, and canst not be deceived with fair pretensions, for the truth of my profession."*

Peter, no doubt, hoped this declaration would satisfy his Lord. But Jesus, after a pause, puts the question to him again, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?* And Peter insists upon his former answer, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*

Now he hoped to escape all future questions upon this point. But Jesus, as though he were still suspicious of him, puts it to him a third time, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?* Peter was grieved that this inquiry should be put to him successively no less than thrice ; it cut him to the heart with the remembrance of his base denial of his Master as often, and perhaps with a fear that he would not now be convinced of his sincerity, but was about to expose him as a traitor, and discard him. Upon this he grows warm, and replies with the most passionate vehemence, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* As much as to say, " Lord, why dost thou try me so often upon this point ? Look only into my heart, which lies all open to thy view, and be thou judge thyself, whether I do not sincerely love thee. I must confess my late conduct looked very suspicious : and I reflect upon it with shame and sorrow : I am unworthy to be ranked by thee among thy friends. But, Lord, unworthy as I am, and base and suspicious as my conduct was, I must insist upon it, that I do love thee ; and it wounds me to the heart that thou shouldst seem so jealous of me. I cannot give up this point ; and I ap-

* Or the comparison in the question may refer to the provision they had just fed upon, and the employment they had just been in. Q. D. " Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these fish and thy fishing trade ? Peter replies, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Well, says Christ, if thou dost really love me, leave this employment, and feed my sheep ; let that be thy business for the future, and shew thy love to me by thy tender care of my sheep ; that is, of my church."

peal to thyself for the truth of it. Jealousy in love, my brethren, suspicion among friends, is a very painful and anxious passion; and never so much so to a pious heart, as when the sincerity of our love to God is the object of it. Such a person cannot be easy while a matter of so much importance lies under suspicion, but must put it beyond all doubt.

And let me tell you, Sirs, this is a question in which we are all most nearly concerned. Are our conduct and temper towards God so entirely and uniformly friendly and dutiful, as to put it beyond all doubt that we do truly love him? Alas, are there not many things that look very suspicious in our case? Should Jesus now call each of us by our names, as he did Peter, and ask us, one by one, *Lovest thou me?* what could we answer? Could we honestly desire him to look into our hearts, that he might see that sacred principle there? and could we produce the genuine evidences of it in our lives? My brethren, if there be an inquiry within the compass of human knowledge that deserves the most solicitous attention, certainly this does. And it is my present design to assist you to come to a determination upon it. I say, we are now going upon this search, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus?" Come, Sirs, let us all join in it; let us all resolve to be determined in this point before we leave this place. For this purpose I shall point out some plain marks of genuine love, and then, supposing that you will have discovered your real character in this respect, I shall address you as divided into two different classes; the friends, and the enemies of Jesus. And as love to God, and love to Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man, are substantially the same, and cannot be separated, I shall not nicely distinguish between them, but speak upon the one or the other, as may be most conducive to my design.

1. I am to point out some plain, genuine marks of divine love; and these I shall derive either from plain scripture, or from the apparent nature and inseparable properties of that passion.

I need hardly tell you, that while there is so much hypocrisy, flattery and compliment in the world, a man's professing the Christian Religion, and a supreme regard to its Founder, is no certain evidence of divine love. Insincerity and treachery, which have done so much mischief in private friendships, and betrayed so many kingdoms, has diffused itself, like a malignant poison, into the affairs of religion; and men dare to compliment and

flatter even the heart-searching God. Judas betrayed his Lord with an *Hail, Master, and a kiss ;* and his conduct before that had the appearance of friendship, otherwise the disciples would have suspected him for the traitor upon the first hint. Therefore there must be something more substantial to evidence the truth of our love, than a mere profession, or the external forms of religion.

Nor does true love consist in a speculative, languid esteem, or a careless, unaffecting good opinion of Jesus Christ. We may think and speak highly of him, and believe very great things concerning him, while the heart is dead and cold towards him ; yea, full of enmity against him. All this may be the effect of education, or cool reasoning, and may hover in the head, without sinking deep into the heart, and becoming a governing principle in practice. It is this speculative good opinion of him which, I am afraid, the generality mistake for divine love. They cannot but know that their hearts are habitually careless and indifferent towards God, that they do not feel those affectionate emotions and strong tendencies of soul towards him, which they feel towards all other objects of their love. However, when they happen to think of him, it is sometimes with a kind of high esteem ; and this they take to be a genuine love to him, though it has no correspondent effects upon their temper or conduct.

I may add farther, That some may love God upon a mistake ; that is, they love him upon supposition that he is quite another kind of being than he really is ; and did they conceive of him as he is, he would appear to their depraved hearts rather an object of terror and abhorrence, than of love and delight. For example, they may suppose him so soft, easy, and passive a being, as not to resent their rebellious conduct : so merciful as hardly ever to execute justice upon sinners ; so careless of the honour of his law and government, as to pass by all their disobedience ; and so foolishly fond of his creatures, as to advance them to happiness promiscuously, without any regard to their moral character, or the honour of his perfections. Such a deity as this is formed exactly according to their taste, to encourage them in sin, and relieve them from horrors of conscience and the fears of futurity ; and no wonder they should love such a being as this, so like themselves ; even criminals would love a judge of this character. But this is not the true God, but the creature of their own foolish imaginations. This is not that God before whom the ce-

lestial armies cry, *holy, holy, holy ; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; who is a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he :* who turns the wicked into hell, and all the nations that forget God ; and who will not admit one soul into heaven but what is made holy in temper and practice beforehand. And did they view him in this light, they would be so far from loving him, that their carnal minds would rise in enmity against him. Now to love God upon such a supposition, is not to please him, but to reproach and affront him ; and he resents it as the highest indignity. How would you take it, if a rake or a villain should love you upon a mistaken notion, that you were a libertine, a thief, or a liar, like himself? Would you thank him for such a friendship ? No ; you would esteem it the basest affront. And when you had convinced him of his mistake, his love would be turned into hatred. My brethren, we must love God for what he is, otherwise we do not love him at all. We must, therefore, know him in some measure as he is, before we can rationally love him ; and particularly we must know and delight in those perfections which are most unacceptable to guilty and depraved creatures, his justice, holiness, and infinite hatred of sin, before we can truly love him.

Having cautioned you against these plausible and popular mistakes, I now resume my purpose, and shall point out some undoubted marks of genuine and sincere love. And that I may not perplex you with too many particulars, I shall only mention these four : that it is of a divine and supernatural original ; and that it produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of its object ; a delight in communing with him : and an earnest study and endeavour to please him, by a life of universal obedience.

1. If you would determine this important inquiry, " Do I really love the Lord Jesus Christ ?" you must previously inquire how you came by your love ? whether it be the mere effect of nature, of education, or of any thing within the power of man ? or whether it was wrought in your hearts by the almighty power of God, after many rebellious struggles and insurrections, and a full conviction of the innate enmity of your carnal minds against him ? If it be the spontaneous production of your own hearts, or of natural causes, if you have always been possessed of it, and never found it difficult to obtain or cherish it ? If you have not been sensible of a supernatural power working it in you, you may be sure it is all delusion. For though the passion of love be innate

in our nature, and is easily excited by a thousand created beauties, yet, alas ! it has no natural tendency towards God. Human nature in its present state is strangely indisposed and disaffected in this respect, as experience has abundantly convinced us, unless we have been stupidly unobservant with regard to ourselves. A state of nature is uniformly represented in scripture as a state of enmity against God. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh*, John iii. 6. and therefore, by nature, we are all flesh in the scripture style. Now *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*, says St. Paul, *because the carnal mind is enmity against God*, &c. Rom. viii. 7, 8. The scriptures every where represent us as being saved in the way of reconciliation ; now reconciliation supposes a previous variance and enmity. Nay, St. Paul expressly tells us, that *we were enemies, when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Rom. v. 10. By nature we are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3 ; and surely we cannot be children of wrath and lovers of God at one and the same time ! Here then you must all plead guilty.—Whatever you now are, it is beyond all doubt that you were once enemies to God. It is sufficient conviction against you that you are men, and belong to a race universally disaffected. And now have you ever been brought out of that state ? If not you are enemies to God still. You could not pass from death unto life in a dream, or an entire insensibility ; for you must have experienced a great change, and you must have been sensible of, and may now recollect a great many deep and affecting sensations that attended it. You must have seen and been shocked at your disaffection : you must have been brought to cry in the most importunate manner to God to give you a better temper, and to shed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. Rom. v. 5. In short, you are made new creatures ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new ; and all these new things are of God, who hath reconciled you to himself. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. Now if this be the test, what would you say to this question, *Lovest thou me ?* Some of you, I trust, could answer, " Lord, I am afraid of the truth of my love ; but this I am sure of, a great change hath been wrought in my soul. Whether I am now a sincere lover of God or not, I am sure I am not what I once was ; not only my outward practice, but the inward temper of my heart towards thee is vastly altered ; it is more filial, affectionate and dutiful." If any of you can advance thus far in your answer, my brethren, it looks comfortable, though you

should still be jealous of yourselves. But, Sirs, let conscience now deal honestly with you: Are there not many of you who are still in your natural state? All your religion is an earth-born, self-sprung thing. You have never been the subjects of a supernatural work of divine grace, nor felt such a great change in the temper of your minds; and if this is your case, I must pronounce, that, however many amiable qualities you may be possessed of, and however fair a profession you make of religion, you have not the love of God in you; for how should you have it, when it is not natural to you, and when it has not been implanted in you by an operation above nature? Indeed, my brethren, if this be your case, you are plainly convicted this day of being destitute of the very first principle of all religion; and pray admit the conviction: you may as well expect to be men without being born, as to love God without being born again. But,

2. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we frequently and affectionately think of him. This you know is the genius and tendency of love in general, to fix our thoughts upon its object; and the Psalmist often mentions this as an attendant of his love to God. *How precious are the thoughts of thee unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee.* Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. *I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.* Psal. lxiii. 6. *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* Psal. civ. 34. Isaiah represents the whole church as saying, *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: with my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* Isaiah xxvi. 8, 9. This you see is the character of the lovers of God. And on the other hand, his enemies are characterized as persons who do not like to retain him in their knowledge, Rom. i. 28. *who forget God;* Psalm ix. 17. and l. 22. *God is not in all their thoughts,* Psal. x. 4. but they practically *say unto the Almighty, depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Job xxi. 14. The thoughts of an enemy are always ungrateful, especially if he is unable to avenge himself of his adversaries; and the mind will turn every way to avoid them. But the thoughts of one we love, how sweet, how welcome, how often do they return! How often does the dear image of an absent friend rise to the mind! and with what affectionate endearments! Unless you are entire strangers to this generous passion, you know, by experience, this is the nature and tendency of love.

And do not these things enable some of you to give a comfortable answer to this question, *Lovest thou me ?* You are often jealous of your love ; but if you love him not, why do your thoughts make so many eager sallies to him ? Once your thoughts could dwell within the compass of created nature, and fly from vanity to vanity, without attempting a flight to heaven. But now do they not often break through the limits of creation, in eager search after God as that supreme good ? And with what affectionate eagerness do they at times dwell there ? How do your souls delight to survey and gaze at his perfections, and contemplate the wonders of his works ! And how often do your thoughts hover round a crucified Jesus, and, as it were, cling and cluster to his cross, like the bees round the hive ! You do not indeed think of him so frequently, or with such affectionate endearments as you should. But can you not appeal to himself, that the thoughts of him are welcome to your minds ; that you do at times dwell with pleasure in the delightful contemplation, even when your hands are busy about other things ; and that it is your daily sorrow that your hearts are not more intimate with him, and pay him more frequent visits ? Does not your experience tell you, that you cannot always let your thoughts grovel in the dust, or run out in an endless chase of things below, but that, in some happy hours, they rise on the wings of love, and most affectionately cleave to your dear Redeemer ? And your thoughts are not the cold speculations of a philosopher, but the warm, passionate, and heart-affecting thoughts of a christian. If this be your case, my brethren, take courage. You love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you may be sure he loves you, and will treat you as his friends.

But are there not many of you who may be convinced by those things, that you have not the love of God in you ? For are you not conscious that your affectionate thoughts are prostituted to some trifle in this lower world, and hardly ever aspire to him ? Nay, are not the thoughts of God, and things divine and eternal, unwelcome to you ? and do you not cast them out of your minds as you would shake a spark of fire from your bosoms ? Do you not find yourselves shy of him, and alienated from him ! Do not those things give you pain which would turn your thoughts towards him ? You do not affect such subjects of meditation or conversation, and you soon grow weary and uneasy when your minds are tied down to them ! And what can be the cause of this,

but a strong disaffection to God, and a secret consciousness that he is your enemy on this account! O, Sirs, what can be more astonishing, or what can be a stronger evidence of enmity to God, than that men should live in such a world as this, and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of their great Author, Preserver and Benefactor! His glory shines upon them from all his works, and meets their eye wherever they look; his word exhibits him to their view in a still more bright and amiable light. It represents the Lord Jesus in all the love and agonies of his crucifixion, and in all the glories of his exaltation; they are receiving mercies from him every moment of their lives; for, in him they live, and move, and have their being: their own reason and consciences tell them that he is the most excellent and lovely being, and worthy of supreme and universal love, and they profess to believe it; and yet he cannot, after all, gain so much as their frequent and affectionate thoughts! Their thoughts, those cheap and easy things, are ungratefully denied to him, who gave them a power of thinking! O what stupid indifferency about the supreme good, or rather what prevailing enmity is here! Can you pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ while this is your case? Can you excuse or extenuate this under the soft name of infirmity? No, it is rank, inveterate, sullen enmity; and a righteous God resents it as such. But,

3. If you love God and the Lord Jesus Christ, you delight in communion with them. Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them. If you are so happy as to have a friend, you know by experience this is the nature of love. Now, though God be a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men, yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual commerce with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives. Hence God is so often said, in the scripture, to draw near to them, and they to him, James iv. 8. Heb. vii. 19. Psalm lxix. 18. and lxxiii. 28 Heb. x. 22. Lam. iii. 57. and St. John, speaking of himself and his fellow-christians, says, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 John i. 3 This divine fellowship is promised by Jesus Christ to all his friends, John xiv. 21, 23. *He that loveth me shall be loved*

of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him; —we will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. This mystical fellowship is peculiar to the friends of God; and others know nothing of it. They are represented as poor strangers and aliens, that have no communication with God. Eph. ii. 12. Col. i. 21. He is shy of them and they of him: they keep at a distance from one another like persons disaffected. —This communion on God's part consists in his communicating to his people the influences of his grace, to quicken them, to inflame their love, to give them filial boldness in drawing near to him, in assuring them of his love to them, and representing himself to them as reconciled and accessible. And on their part it consists in a liberty of heart and speech in pouring out their prayers to him, a delightful freedom of spirit in all exercises of devotion, in returning him love for love, and dedicating themselves to him. Thus there is a kind of interchange of thoughts and affections, mutual freedoms and endearments, between them. And O! how divinely sweet in some happy hours of sacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a constant series of pure, unmingled happiness. But, alas! at times their Beloved withdraws himself, and goes from them, and then they languish, and pine away, and mourn, like the mourning turtle that has lost his mate. This intercourse with God may be a strange thing to some of you; and to vindicate the want of it, you may give it some odious name; enthusiasm, fanaticism, or heated imagination. But I must tell you, if you know nothing of it, your temper and experience is entirely different from all the friends of God, and, therefore, you cannot rank yourselves in that happy number.

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and the like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him; and they enjoy the freedom of children and friends with him: and on this account they delight in those ordinances, and take pleasure in attending upon them. The workings of their hearts in this respect, you may discover in David, when, by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was banished from

the stated ordinances of public worship. Psal. xlii. 1, 2, 4, and lxxxiv. throughout, and xxvii. 4.

And now, my brethren, to come nearer home, have not some of you experienced the sacred joys of communion with God? And were not those the sweetest hours of your life? Have you not found it good for you to draw near to him? And when he has withdrawn his presence, how have you languished and mourned, and could never be easy till he was pleased to return to you? Do you not also find a sacred pleasure in the institutions of the gospel, because there you hope to meet your God, and enjoy communion with him? Is this the principle that prompts you to pray, to hear, and perform every religious duty? Then you may appeal to a heart-searching God, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*

But does not this view of the matter give the conscience of some of you reason to condemn you? You have neither known nor desired this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Alas! you know nothing of those freedoms of divine friendship: and you have no prevailing pleasure in devotion. You either neglect the duties of religion, or else you perform them from custom, education, constraint of conscience, or some other such principle. Let me point out one instance as a specimen; and that is secret prayer and closet devotion. Nothing can be more expressly commanded than this is by Christ, Matt. vi 6. and is this your daily practice? Is this the most pleasant exercise of your life? Or is it a mere formality, or a weariness to you? My brethren, inquire honestly into this matter.

4. And lastly, If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you earnestly study and endeavour to please him by a life of universal obedience. Love is always desirous to please the person beloved; and it will naturally lead to a conduct that is pleasing. This, then, you may be sure of, that if you love Jesus, it is the labour of your life to please him. The grand inquiry with you is not, will this or that please men? will it please myself? or will it promote my interest? but, will it please my God and Saviour? If not, I will have nothing to do with it. This is the standing rule of your practice: Let others consult their own inclinations, or the taste of the age; let them consult their own secular interest, or the applause of mortals; you consult what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. xii. 2. See also Eph. vi. 6. 1 Pet. iii. 17. Heb. xiii. 21. and if you may but please him, it is

enough. But are there not some of you who are hardly ever concerned with this dutiful solicitude? If you can but please yourselves, and those whose favour you would court, if you can but promote your own interest, you are not solicitous whether you please God, or not. This proves you destitute of his love.

The only way to please God, and the best test of your love to him, is obedience to his commandments. This is made the decisive mark by Christ himself. *If a man love me, he will keep my words—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings.* John xiv. 23, 24.—He repeats it over and over in different forms: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* ver. 21. *If ye love me, keep my commandments,* ver. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14. *This is the love of God,* says St. John; that is, it is the surest evidence, and the natural, inseparable effect of your love to God, *that you keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. that is, they will not seem grievous to one that obeys them from the generous principle of love.

Here then, you that profess to love the Lord Jesus, here is an infallible test for your love. Do you make it the great study of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honestly endeavour to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that because he has enjoined it? And do you vigorously resist and struggle against every sin, however constitutional, however fashionable, however gainful, because he forbids it? And is the way of obedience pleasant to you? Would you choose this way to heaven rather than any other, if it were left to your election? What does conscience answer to this? Do not some of you stumble and hesitate here? If you should speak the truth, you must say, "I cannot but confess that I do wilfully indulge myself in some things which Jesus has forbidden, and leave unattempted some duties which he has commanded?" Alas! is this the case? Then his love does not dwell in you: you are undeniably his enemies, whatever be your pretensions. But if you can say, "Lord, I own that in many things I offend; in many things I come short of my duty; but, if I know myself, I think, I can honestly declare, that it is my sincere and earnest desire to do thy will, and that it is my real endeavour in every instance in which it is made known to me;" I say, if you can make this declaration, your case looks encouraging; this is the dutiful temper and modest language of genuine love.

And now, my brethren, if Jesus should put this question to each of you, *Lovest thou me?* are you prepared to answer him? Can you desire more plain, or more certain evidences than have been given? Surely, no; and therefore, if you are still quite undetermined, it is owing to the real obscurity and perplexity of your case, or to your carelessness and inattention, or to your wilfully shutting your eyes against conviction. My brethren, if you have these characteristics of love to Jesus, away with your painful jealousies, and believe that your hearts are upright before him. But if you are destitute of them, be assured you are equally destitute of his love. Love can never be separated from its natural fruits and effects; and therefore, without these, it is the greatest absurdity to pretend to it. Can you rise up now, and tell the Lord Jesus to his face, "Lord, it is true, I have not the fruits and evidences of love, but I love thee notwithstanding; I love thee above all, though I have no frequent affectionate thoughts of thee: I love thee, though I hate to think of thee; though I have no pleasure in conversing with thee, nor any concerns to please thee, and keep thy commandments; that is, I love thee, though my temper and conduct towards thee be those of an enemy!" Alas! Sirs, will you presume to impose upon an omniscient God, with such absurd contradictory pretensions as these? Would such a love as this pass current among men? Offer it now to your governor, your father, or your friend, and see if they will accept of it. Tell your friend, "I most sincerely love you, though I do not love to think of you, or converse with you; I love you, though I care not whether I please you;" would he not discard you from his friendship, as an inconsistent pretender, and highly resent it, that you should think to impose upon him by such absurd pretensions? And shall that pass for sincere, supreme love to God, which would not be accepted as common friendship among men? Shall enmity, disguised under hypocritical pretensions, be offered to him, under the name of friendship? With horror I mention it; and yet I must mention it, that you may be shocked at your conduct! Do you think he wants understanding to be thus imposed upon? It is a plain case you have not the least spark of true love to him; you are enemies to him in your minds by wicked works, therefore pass sentence upon yourselves: "Here is a soul so perverse and wicked, that it has never yet loved its divine Parent and the supreme excellency; has never loved the blessed Jesus, the Friend of sin-

ners." And now, should all the enemies of God in this assembly walk to one side, and crowd together by themselves, how thin would they leave this congregation! How few would be left behind! Well, the day is coming, when you must be separated, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To the left hand, sinners, to the left hand of your Judge, you must go, who continue destitute of his love. Then you will know the truth of your case; but, alas! it will be too late to correct it. But now the discovery of it is the first step towards the amendment of it. And therefore, let your consciences now anticipate the proceedings of the great judgment day, and draw a line of separation betwixt you, that I may address you according to the classes in which you are found. This leads me, pursuant to my proposed method,

II. To address myself to you who have now discovered that you are sincere lovers of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding your many imperfections. And my time will allow me to offer only two things to you.

The one is, your heaven is sure. I repeat it again, your heaven is sure; as sure as the sincerity of your love. Love is the grand qualification for the enjoyment of God. You can be happy in his presence, because you love him; happy in his service, because you love him; happy in the contemplation of his glories, because you love him. In short, love renders you fit for heaven, and all its employments and fruitions, and therefore you shall certainly be admitted there; for God never will exclude one soul that is fit for it, or that could relish the happiness there. Love is the substance of all religion and obedience; love is the fulfilling of the law; and that love you have in your hearts. O happy souls, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" for, as the apostle reasons, *your hope will not make you ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost.* Rom. v. 4, 5. Love is an immortal principle. *Charity*, or love, *never faileth.* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. It is, therefore, not only your privilege, but your duty, to rejoice: and how can you refrain, when in a few years, at most, you will be with that Jesus whom you love unseen, in all the glories, and in all the felicities, of the heavenly world.

The other thing I would mention to you is, alas! how faint, how imperfect is your love! And what great reason have you to cherish it, and labour to raise it into a vigorous flame? I need not

offer much for your conviction on this head ; for alas ! you cannot but be sensible your love bears no suitable proportion to the excellency of the divine nature, the dying love of Jesus, and your obligations to him. Alas ! it is but a feeble spark, and sometimes so buried and suffocated under the weight of your corruptions, that you can hardly discern it at all, and fear it is entirely extinguished. O then, I beseech you, love your God more : love your dear Redeemer more. Do not affront him with such a languid love : think over his excellencies, his relations to you, his unbounded love and grace to you ; and these considerations may fire your hearts, cold as they are. Cry to him to kindle the sacred flame in your breasts, and avoid every thing that tends to damp it : guard against the friendship of this world, which is enmity against God ; and against all the workings of sin : avoid all causes of variance and distance between God and you, and labour to maintain a settled peace and a constant correspondence. But the other class of my hearers stand in greater need of immediate relief, and therefore,

III. I shall address myself to such of you as may have discovered, by this day's trial, that you are destitute of the love of Christ : and what I have to say to you, my dear fellow mortals, may be reduced under two heads, your sin and danger ; and the most proper means of deliverance.

To convince you of your sin and danger in not loving God and his Son Jesus Christ, consider,

1. It is the supreme excellency that you have refused to love. The most venerable Majesty, the most consummate wisdom, the most rich goodness and grace, the most amiable justice ; these are the things you disaffect, while you are disaffected towards God : for these are his very nature. You neglect and disgust faithfulness, candour, veracity, mercy, benevolence, and every moral beauty in the highest perfection. You are enemies to the origin, the sum total of all excellency. Now this may strike you with conviction in various views—as first, how depraved and corrupt must your souls be, that can be disaffected to such a glorious object ? How must your taste be vitiated, that cannot relish the supreme good ? You can love the faint shadows of these perfections in your fellow-creatures : you can love generosity, benevolence, mercy, justice, and such virtues, in mortals, and may you not fall down overwhelmed with astonishment, and cry out, " Lord, what is this that has befallen my soul, that I cannot love

thee? that I can love any thing else that is lovely, and yet cannot love thee? O! what a perverse, depraved, abominable soul is this!" Sirs, must you not be shocked to think you have such souls within you? If your bodies were all over-run with rotten ulcers; if your features were all convulsed and distorted into the most hideous forms; if your limbs were all shattered and dislocated; if your taste were so vitiated that you loathed all healthful food, and you should crawl upon the earth, feeding on its mire and dirt; all this would not render you half so odious and horrible a monster as a soul disaffected towards God. Again, what an aggravated wickedness must this be? Your obligations to love him are just in proportion to his loveliness and excellency; and the wickedness of breaking these obligations is in exact proportion to their strength. And as his excellency and your obligations are infinite, your wickedness in not loving him must be so too. What illustration shall I use to represent this crime in its proper infernal colours! If you should commence an enemy to the whole creation; prosecute men and angels with implacable abhorrence; detest the father that begat you, and the breasts that gave you suck; nay, if you should commence a direct enemy to yourself, be perpetually plotting against your own life, all this would not equal the crime of hating the ever-blessed God; for all these beings together have no excellency compared to him, and your obligation to love him is prior and fundamental to all others. Here your love should begin, here it should centre, and then extend its lines to all parts of the circle of creation; therefore no more plead your innocence. If you had never committed one sin beside in all your life, this one of not loving God is sufficient to condemn you forever to the lowest hell.—Further, this sin will appear more aggravated, if you consider, that, by not loving God, you do in the strongest manner declare, that he has not these excellencies, but is a worthless being, undeserving of your love. When you do not love him, after all the discoveries he has made of himself to you, it is plain that this is the habitual sense of your hearts, that he has no excellency worthy of your love. This is the language of your hearts; and this language is much more strong and expressive than that of your lips. You may speak things inadvertently, which your second thoughts would retract; but by being all your life destitute of the love of God, you have all your life been declaring that you look upon him as a worthless being,

far inferior to a thousand things upon earth, to which you have given your love. Now you would not dare to utter such blasphemy as this, and how can you dare to declare it, much more strongly, by the temper of your hearts, and stand to it as a truth? O! will you never retract it by becoming a lover of God? My brethren, can you imagine a more shocking, insolent wickedness than this? And what an hateful soul must that be that has been guilty of it all its days! What is this but to say, with the atheistic fool, No God? for he is not God, if he be not supremely excellent and amiable? and if you wish there were no God, what do you do but wish universal desolation, and imprecate destruction to yourself, and every other being? for were there no God, there could be nothing else; there would not have been one spark of being through infinite space in any point of duration.

2. Your not loving God is a most unnatural wickedness. He is your Father; and that in a higher sense than your earthly parents can be. He is the Author of your bodies, because it was he that first established, and still continues in force, those laws of generation, by which they were produced: and had it not been for this, men could no more produce one another than a stone or a clod of earth. As to your souls, the nobler part of your persons, they are his immediate offspring, produced by him without the instrumentality of secondary causes, of any pre-existent materials. Thus he is your Father in the highest sense; and yet you have not loved him! You have not loved him who gave you the power of love! You have not loved him from whose creative hands you came a few years ago! What an unnatural wickedness is this? What were you an hundred years ago? You were nothing; and you would have continued so to all eternity, had he not spoke you into being. And yet you have not sincerely loved him to this moment! Most astonishing! Must you not tremble at and abominate yourselves as the vilest and most unnatural monsters? Should the child that received his being from you in a subordinate sense, the child you dandled upon your knees, and for whom you are now laboriously making provision, should he hate the sight of you, shun your company, and do nothing to please you, how would you take it? Would you not think the unnatural miscreant unworthy of life? And yet thus you have treated your heavenly Father, to whom you were under much higher and more endearing obligations. You have treated him as only a de-

spised broken idol, in whom you could take no pleasure. And are you pleased with yourselves notwithstanding? shall not such a shocking prodigy, at which angels gaze with horror, be struck with horror at itself?—Should all the world treat God as you have done, what would be the consequence? Why, there would not be one lover of God to be found among all the numerous race of man. And yet, if you have a right to hate him, they have too. Have you any peculiar indulgence in this case? Can you produce an exemption from that universal law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart? &c.* You see then whither your conduct leads, and do you not shudder to think of it? And can you imagine yourselves innocent still? Do you think you have tolerably good hearts for all? I am sure your reason, if it be not entirely lost, will not allow you to think so.

3. This is a most ungrateful wickedness. Think what God has done for you; how many mercies he has given you, as many mercies as moments; think how many deliverances he has wrought for you; see what a well-furnished world he has formed for your accommodation.—Think, O think, of the love and sufferings of Jesus; see the abasement, the labours, the hardships of his life; see the agonies of his crucifixion; see the crown of thorns, the mangled visage, the disjointed limbs, the flowing blood, the bursting heart, the dying pangs of your blessed Redeemer. O! think upon, and view these things, and then say, what do you think of your enmity against him after all this? Can ingratitude rise to a higher pitch? O! is this your return for all the kindness of God? for all the love of Jesus? There was something very cutting in his question to the Jews, *Many good works have I done among you.* I have never provoked you by any thing but good works; *and for which of these do you stone me?* John x. 32. This may be easily accommodated to you. Many kind actions has he done to you, many grievous sufferings has he undergone for you; and for which of these do you hate him? O must not such an expostulation wound you to the heart, and melt you down at his feet in the deepest repentance? O! can you continue enemies to the very cross of Christ? Must not that disarm your resentment, and dissolve your hearts, hard as they are, into the most tender love?

4. This is a most comprehensive wickedness. You are repeatedly told, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. xiii. 8, 10. James xi. 8. The first and great commandment upon which

(with a like precept with regard to our neighbour) the whole law and the prophets depend, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.* that is, love is the root, the principle, the substance of all obedience, because it constrains a man to a cheerful observance of every divine precept, and naturally disposes him to a dutiful conduct. Now if love be the fulfilling of the whole law, it follows, that the want of love is the breach of the whole law: it is dashing the two tables of the law in pieces at once. As love is the principle of all obedience, so enmity is the principle of all disobedience; and while this reigns in your hearts, it diffuses a deadly poison through every thing you do; and you cannot perform one action acceptable to God. All your endeavours are but the treacherous flattery of an enemy, or the forced homage of a rebel obliged to feign submission. In short, the want of love to God is the want of every thing that is morally good: it is the root of all evil; it is a complication of all wickedness; a summary, nay, I may say, the sum total of all disobedience and rebellion. And can you any longer build your hopes on the fewness or smallness of your sins? Alas! while you are possessed of this temper, your hearts are full of every evil. This renders not only your actions, your words, and thoughts of every kind, guilty and vile, but the stated, settled bent and disposition of your minds, most wicked and abominable.* And must you not fall on your faces before your injured Sovereign, and cry, guilty, guilty?—But,

5. This is a most inexcusable wickedness. Your mouth must be stopped, and you have no plea left to excuse or extenuate it. You cannot plead here, as you do in some other things, "There are so many different denominations in the world, so many different opinions about religion, that I know not what to choose;" for here, as I told you, all are agreed. They are all unanimous in this, that love to God is essential to religion. Not only all denominations of christians, but Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, and all that believe the existence of a God, confess this. And are you of a religion that does not include the love of God in it? It is the religion of devils, or rather it is the most diabolical irreligion. I insist the more boldly upon this point, because it is a catholic truth, free from all suspicion of party. You cannot plead

* When the omniscient God views you asleep, when all the powers of action are suspended, what can he say of you but this, "Here lies an enemy of God?"

that you have no time for the exercise of love to God; for love is not the work of the hands, but of the heart; and may be performed while you are engaged in other business. Can you not think affectionately of a friend behind a counter, or over a plough? So you might love God, and yet follow your daily employments.—Nor can you excuse yourselves from your inability; for God has implanted the passion of love in your nature, and you find it easy to love other things: you can love the world, you can love a child or a friend, and why cannot you love God? The act of love is the same in both cases, and one would think it would be an easier thing for you to love him who is the Supreme Excellence, than imperfect creatures, whose excellency is limited, or mingled with many hateful qualities.—Whence then is your inability in this case? It is nothing else but the strength of your enmity; that is, you are so disaffected to the ever-blessed God, that you cannot love him; and does this lessen your crime? Do the inveteracy and rancour of your enmity excuse it? Alas! that is its most dreadful aggravation. O! how wicked must you be when you are so disaffected to the God that made you, and the Saviour that died for you, that you cannot prevail upon your hearts to love him! Farther, Have you tried what can be done to root out and subdue this enmity by the power of the Holy Spirit? Have you cried to God in earnest prayer, and used all means for that end? If not, it is plain you are an enemy to God, and love to continue so: you hate him, and practically insist upon it you do right. Nor can you pretend ignorance in this case; for your own conscience tells you, it is your duty to love God. In short, you are entirely inexcusable: you sin against the full conviction of your own minds, and you must join with God, angels and men, in your own condemnation.

6. This temper, if it continue, will certainly exclude you from the kingdom of heaven. Alas! what would you do there with your disaffected hearts?—Heaven would be an enemy's country to you. What pleasure could you have in the society or service of that God whom you hate? in those exercises and enjoyments for which you have no relish? Could you be happy in the practice of eternal flattery, bowing and singing insincere complimental praises to an enemy? Could you affect the society there? There is not one like you in all that innumerable assembly: they all love that God whom you disgust. And with what pleasure could you mingle among them? How could you live in a country where

the laws, the customs, the employments, the disposition of the inhabitants, are all contrary to your temper? O! you need no sentence from your Judge to exclude you, you would exclude yourselves, and choose to mingle with your fellow-devils :— Which leads me to add,

7. This temper, if it continue, will certainly lead you to hell. You are fit for no other place. Where should the enemies of God be, but in an infernal prison? There is the same propriety in it as in shutting up madmen in bedlam, or rebels in a dungeon. Why, you are devilized already; you have the very temper of devils: enmity to God is the grand constituent of a devil; the worst ingredient in that infernal composition; and this you have in your hearts, and, as it were, incorporated with your habitual temper. And what do you think will become of you? Judge yourselves, must you not be doomed to that everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, whom you resemble?

Here I must subjoin, that if ever you are brought to love God it must be in this world. In heaven and hell no new dispositions are planted; but those that are found prevalent in the soul will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell, or to love God in heaven: the seeds are all sown in the present state, which then spring up to maturity. Therefore, if you would ever have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, now, now is the time; now or never.

But, "What means (you will say) shall I use for this purpose?"—Here I must be short: but if you are really in earnest, you will easily understand the shortest hints.

1. Labour to be deeply sensible of the aggravated sinfulness and danger of your present state. Deeply impress your minds with this. Check the levity of your minds, and indulge a serious, anxious, sorrowful temper; for your case really requires it.

2. Be deeply sensible of the necessity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inspire you with divine love. The disease is so far gone, you cannot heal yourselves; but, blessed be God, He is able, He is able to make such an enemy as you his hearty friend and dutiful subject. Therefore,

3. Betake yourselves to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt, your vileness, your liableness to divine displeasure: cry for his Spirit to shed abroad his love in your hearts: here let your petitions centre; for this is the main thing. Endeavour to de-

vote yourselves to him, to give up your disaffected hearts to him, to bow that rebellious soul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon the glory of God, his kindness to you, the love and sufferings of Christ, and such subjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.

5. Be not weary in the use of these means, but persevere, hold on, until you find a thorough change produced in your hearts. Your eternal All is concerned ; therefore be not remiss and careless ; be not soon tired or discouraged. Never give over until your last breath ; and who knows but that hostile spirit of yours may soon become the friend of God, and at length shine among his celestial friends in all their transcendent glories and ineffable and eternal felicity ! Amen.

Sermon 48.

THE NATURE AND AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.

JOHN III. 7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

THOSE doctrines are not always most absurd in themselves, nor strange to a well-informed mind, which are most wondered at in the world. Ignorance is apt to wonder, where knowledge discovers nothing amazing or unaccountable. To support our observations, proofs might be given ; but it is to my present purpose to take notice only of one, one that excited from Nicodemus wonder, about 1700 years ago, and is still wondered at ; nay, more, is ridiculed in an ignorant world : I mean the doctrine of Regeneration or the New Birth.

Nicodemus comes to Christ with a conviction of his high character as a Teacher from God, who attested his commission by the strong and popular evidence of miracles. From such a Teacher he expects sublime instructions ; and from his own improvements in Jewish learning, he, no doubt, flatters himself he shall be able to comprehend them ; but when, instead of gratifying his curiosity by telling him strange and great things of the kingdom of the Messiah, as a secular prince, and a mighty conqueror, as he and his countrymen expected, or discoursing like a Rabbi on the Jewish law ; I say, when, instead of this, Jesus

opens the conference by a solemn and authoritative declaration of the necessity of something under the name of another birth, how is Nicodemus surprised! This he cannot understand. This seems strange, new doctrine to him; and he has an objection ready against it, as an absurdity and an impossibility: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* This objection, which was altogether impertinent, and founded upon a gross mistaken notion of the doctrine, may serve as a specimen of all the objections that have been made against this doctrine ever since; they have all proceeded from ignorance, or from gross mistaken notions of an evident truth; and hence men have imagined, like this master of Israel, that they reasoned strongly against it, when in reality they were saying nothing at all to the purpose, and did not so much as understand the case.

Our condescending Lord took a great deal of pains to give Nicodemus right notions of this doctrine. For this purpose he presents it before him in various views. He tells him, he did not mean a second natural birth, but a birth of water and of the spirit; a birth that renders a man spiritual, and consequently fit for that spiritual kingdom he was about to erect; and that the free and sovereign Spirit of God, the Author of this new birth, operated like *the wind, which bloweth where it listeth.* Nicodemus still continues gazing at him, and wondering what he should mean. He is puzzled, after all, and asks, *How can these things be?* Jesus tells him the wonder did not lie in the doctrine, but in his ignorance of it, when he was a teacher of the law; *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?*

The connection of my text is this: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit; therefore, marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.* That is to say, "the doctrine you are so much surprised at, is not at all absurd, so as to make you wonder to hear it from my mouth. You cannot but know, that all mankind are born of the flesh; that is, propagated in a way that communicates a depraved nature to them; and hence, they are flesh; that is, corrupt and carnal; and therefore wholly unfit to be admitted into my kingdom, which is pure and spiritual. But that which is born of the spirit is spirit; that is, spiritual and holy; and therefore fit for that spiritual and holy kingdom, which I am come to set up. Now, if this be the case, you have certainly no need to marvel at

this doctrine: can it seem strange to you, that impure, unholy creatures must be changed, before they can be fit members of so holy a society? Can you marvel at this? No; you would have more reason to marvel at the contrary.

It is one part of my design to-day to inquire, whether the doctrine of the new birth be indeed such a strange, absurd, or impossible thing in itself, as to deserve that amazement, and indeed contempt, which it generally meets with in the world: or whether it be not rational, necessary, and worthy of universal acceptance? But before I enter upon this, it will be proper to inquire,

What the new birth is? And,

Who is the author of it?

And in what way does he generally produce it?

Remove your prejudices, my hearers, against this doctrine, suspend your disbelief, and cease to wonder at, or ridicule it, till these points be explained, lest you be found to speak evil of the things you know not.

I. Let us inquire, What it is to be born again?

To gain your attention to this inquiry, I need only put you in mind, that whatever be meant by the new birth, it is not an insignificant speculation, not the disputed peculiarity of a party, not the attainment of a few good men of the first class, but it is essential to every good man, and absolutely necessary to salvation. You cannot doubt of this, if you look upon Jesus Christ as a person of common veracity, and worthy of credit in his most solemn declarations; for he has declared, over and over again, with the utmost solemnity, that *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3, 5, and 7. Attend then, if you think your eternal salvation worthy of your attention.

The phrase, *to be born again*, like most other expressions used upon divine subjects, is metaphorical, and brings in natural things, with which we are familiarly acquainted, to assist our conceptions of divine things, which might otherwise be above our comprehension. We all know what it is to be born; and our knowledge of this may help us to understand what it is to be born again. As by our first birth we become men, or partake of human nature; so, by our second birth, we become christians, and are made partakers of a divine and spiritual nature. As our first birth introduces us into this world, and into human society, so our second birth introduces us into the church of Christ, and makes us true members of that holy society. As by our first birth we resemble

our parents, at least in the principal lineaments of human nature; so by our second birth we are made partakers of the divine nature; that is, we are made to resemble the blessed God in holiness; or, as St. Paul expresses it, *we are renewed after his image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.* Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. The effect is like its cause; the child like the parent. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.** In our first birth we are endowed with child like and filial dispositions towards our human parents; and when we are born of God, we are inspired with a child-like and filial temper towards him, as our heavenly Father. By our natural birth we are placed in an imperfect, but growing state. We have all the powers of human nature, though none of them in perfection; but from that time they grow and improve, till they at length arrive to maturity. In like manner, in our second birth, all the principles of virtue and grace are implanted; but their growth and improvement is the work of the christian life: and from that time they continue gradually growing, though with many interruptions, till at death they arrive at maturity and perfection. In our natural birth we pass through a very great change. The infant that had lain in darkness, breathless and almost insensible, and with little more than a vegetative life, enters into a new state, feels new sensations, craves a new kind of nourishment, and discovers new powers. In like manner, in the second birth, the sinner passes through a great change; a change as to his view of divine things: as to his temper, his practice, and his state; a change so great, that he may with propriety be denominated another man, or a new creature. As I shall adjust my discourse to the narrow limits of an hour, I must pass over, or but slightly touch upon all the particulars suggested by the metaphor in my text, except the last, which is the most comprehensive and instructive; namely, That the new birth implies a great change in the views, the temper, the practice, and the state of the sinner; and under this head, sundry of the other particulars may be reduced.

The various forms of expression, which the scripture uses to represent what is here called a second birth, all conspire to teach us, that it consists in a great change. It is represented as a resurrection, or a change from death to life: *You hath he quickened,*

* Flesh of flesh, and spirit of spirit. This is according to the established laws of generation, by which every thing begets its like.

saith St. Paul, *who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Eph. ii. 1. It is represented as a new creation : *If any man be in Christ*, says the same inspired author, *he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; and behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. *Put on*, says he, *the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Eph. iv. 24. These and like expressions signify a very great change : and such forms of speech are very commonly used in the same sense ; which shews they are so far from being ridiculous, that they are agreeable to the common sense of mankind. When we see a man that we once knew, look, and speak, and act as he used to do, it is customary to say, " He is the old man still." But if we see a great alteration in his appearance, his temper, or behaviour, we are apt to say, " He is a new man ;" or, " He is quite another creature." When we see a rugged boisterous man become meek and inoffensive, we are apt to say, " He is become a mere child." These forms of speech are so significant and popular, that they have even passed into proverbs, and that in various countries and languages ; and hence they are used in the scriptures as plain and familiar representations of this great truth. And hence we are bold to use them, in spite of that senseless ridicule and contempt, which some would cast upon them ; but which rebounds upon themselves, for censuring modes of expression that are not only sacred, but agreeable to common sense.

Now, since it is evident the new birth signifies a great change ; you are impatient, by this time, I hope, to know more particularly what it is. It is the change of a thoughtless, ignorant, hard-hearted, rebellious sinner, into a thoughtful, well-informed, tender-hearted, dutiful servant of God. It is the implantation of the seeds or principles of every grace and virtue in a heart that was entirely destitute of them, and full of sin. The sinner that was wont to have no practical affectionate regard for the great God, is now made to revere, admire, and love him as the greatest and best of Beings ; to rejoice in him as his supreme happiness, and cheerfully to submit to him as his Ruler. Formerly his temper and conduct would better agree to the infidelity of an atheist than to the faith of a christian : but now, he thinks, and speaks, and acts, as one that really believes there is a God ; a God who inspects all his ways, and will call him to an account. The heart that was wont to disgust the holiness of the divine law, and murmur at the strictness of its precepts, now loves it ; loves it

for that very reason for which it was wont to hate it; namely, because it is so holy. This was the temper of the Psalmist: *Thy word is very pure; therefore* (that is, on that very account) *thy servant loveth it.* Psal. cxix. 140. and of St. Paul, *The law is holy, and the commandment is holy*—and what follows? *I delight*, says he, *in the law of God, after the inner man. And I consent unto the law that it is good.* Rom. vii. 12, 16, 22. The haughty, stubborn, deceitful heart, is now made humble, pliable, simple, and honest, like that of a little child. Hence Christ says, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.* Matt. xviii. 3, 4. This was also the temper of David: *Lord, my heart is not haughty—surely I have behaved myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child* Psalm cxxxi. 1, 2. The heart that used to have no delight in communion with God, but lived as without God in the world, now feels a filial desire to draw near to him, and address him with the humble boldness and freedom of a child. *Because ye are sons*, says St. Paul, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father*, Gal. iv. 6. That is, Father, Father: the repetition of so tender a name intimates the greatest endearment and affectionate freedom. The heart that had no realizing affecting views of a future state, now feels the energy of that doctrine, and looks upon heaven and hell as indeed the most important realities. The heart that was once earthly and sensual, eagerly set upon things below, as its main pursuit, is now taught to aspire to heaven; in heaven is its treasure, and there it will be. The thoughts that were once scattered among a thousand trifles, are now frequently collected, and fixed upon the great concerns of religion. Now also the heart is remarkably altered towards the Lord Jesus: formerly it seemed sufficient to wear his name, to profess his religion, to believe him to be the Saviour of the world, to insert his name in a prayer now and then, and to give a formal attendance upon the institutions of his worship; but O! now he appears in a more important and interesting light. Now the sinner is deeply sensible that he is indeed the only Saviour, and he most eagerly embraces him under that endearing character, and intrusts his eternal all in his hands. Now he appears to him all lovely and glorious, and his heart is forever captivated with his beauty. Now he prays, and longs, and languishes for him,

and feels him to be all in all. O! now the very thought of being without Christ, kills him. Thus, *God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. in that face where it shines with the fairest beams. Now also the man has very different views of himself: he sees himself to be a guilty, depraved, vile creature, all overrun with sin, and destitute of all goodness, but, as it is wrought in him by divine grace; how different is this from the proud self-righteous estimate he was wont to form of himself! His views of sin are also quite different from what they used to be: he used to look upon it as a slight excusable evil, except when it broke out into some gross acts. But now he sees it to be unspeakably vile and base, in every instance and degree. An evil thought, a corrupt motion of desire, an indisposed heart towards God, appears to him a shocking evil, such as nothing but the infinite mercy of God can forgive, and even that mercy, upon no other account but that of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He sees it does most justly deserve everlasting punishment; and he is often lost in wonder that the gospel should open a door of hope even for him, who has been so deeply guilty. It breaks his heart to think that he indulged so base a thing so long; and he can never be fully reconciled to himself, while he feels the remains of it within him. His repentance now takes a new turn. Formerly he was entirely under the influence of self-love, and therefore, when he had any concern for his sin, it entirely proceeded from the servile principle of fear; fear of the punishment, and not hatred of the crime. But now his soul is ennobled with more generous principles: now he can mourn over sin, as a base ungrateful evil, even when he has no thoughts of the punishment: now he can mourn over sin as against God, and not only as against a sin-punishing, but as against a sin-pardoning God. Now he mourns with generous sorrow over pardoned sin; and God's being so good as to forgive him, is so far from lessening the evil of sin in his view, that this very consideration peculiarly affects him. O! that he should be so base as to sin against a God who is so gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought breaks his heart; and God's forgiving him, is a reason why he can never forgive himself. The heart has also a new temper in the duties of religion; it can no more indulge an habitual coldness or lukewarmness in them, but exerts its powers to the utmost; and, when it has a lan-

guishing interval, it cannot be easy in that condition, but tries to rouse itself again. Experience teaches that it is good to draw near to God ; and the ordinances of the gospel are not tiresome formalities, as they were wont to be, but the means of life and refreshment ; and they are its happiest hours which are spent in attending upon them. Now the gospel is not that dull, stale neglected tale it once was, but the most joyful tidings that ever came from heaven. As a new-born babe, the regenerate soul desires the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. and it is esteemed more than necessary food. Now the careless, secure soul, that was always cautious of over-doing in religion, and flattered itself there was no need of being so much in earnest, is effectually roused, and strives in earnest to enter in at the strait gate, convinced both of the difficulty and necessity of entering. Now religion is no longer a matter by the by, but a serious business ; and every thing that comes in competition with it must give way to it. The man is resolved to save his soul at all adventures ; and this, he is now convinced, is no easy work. To sum up the whole, for I can only give a few specimens of particulars, the regenerate soul is changed universally in every part. I do not mean the change is perfect in any part : alas ! no ; sin still lives, and sometimes makes violent struggles, though crucified. The old man dies hard, but I mean, the change does really extend to every part. The soul is in no respect the same it was wont to be, as to the concerns of religion. It has new views, new sensations, new joys, new sorrows, new inclinations and aversions, new hopes and fears : in short, as the apostle tells us, *all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. and according to his inspired prayer, *the whole man, soul, body, and spirit is sanctified.* 1 Thes. v. 23.

By way of confirmation, let me add a few characters of a regenerate man, which are expressly scriptural. *Every one that loveth is born of God*, saith St. John, 1 John iv. 7. That is, every new-born soul is possessed with a generous love to all mankind, which prompts it to observe the whole law in its conduct towards them, (*for love is the fulfilling of the whole law*) and restrains it from doing them any injury ; *(for love worketh no evil to his neighbour)* Rom. xii. 10. This love extends not only to friends, but also to strangers, and even to enemies. It is a friendship to human nature in general ; it spreads over the whole earth, and embraces the whole race of man. But as the righteous are the more excellent ones of the earth, it terminates upon them in a peculiar

degree: and the reason is obvious; they are, in a peculiar sense, the saints' brethren, the children of the same heavenly Father; and they bear a resemblance to him: and if he loves the Original, he must also love the Copy. Thus, says St. John, *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* 1 John v. 1.

Another character of regeneration the same apostle gives you, 1 John v. 4, 5, and that is, victory over the world by faith. *Every one that is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* That is, whatever temptations may arise from the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world, or from the society of mankind, the man that is born of God has such believing views of eternal things, as constrains him to conflict with them, and overcome them. He has not such a mean dastardly soul, as to yield to opposition. He is enabled by divine grace, to brave dangers, and encounter difficulties in so good a cause: he dares to be wise and happy, though all the world should turn against him. O what a change is this from his former temper!

Another distinguishing characterisic of the new birth, is, universal holiness of practice, or a conscientious observance of every known duty, and an honest, zealous resistance of every known sin. There is no known duty, however unfashionable, disagreeable, or dangerous, but what the true convert honestly endeavours to perform; and there is no known sin, however customary, pleasing, or gainful, but what he honestly resists, and from which he labours to abstain. This necessarily follows from what has been said; for when the principles of action are changed within, the course of action will be changed too. When the heart is made holy, it will infallibly produce habitual holiness of practice. A good tree must bring forth good fruit. This St. John asserts in the strongest manner, and in various forms. *We know*, says he, *that every one that doth righteousness;* that is, that habitually practiseth righteousness, *is born of God*, 1 John ii. 29. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;* that is, he sinneth not habitually, so as he may be denominated a sinner by way of distinction; *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself;* that is, keepeth himself from the infection of sin; *and that wicked one toucheth him not.* 1 John v. 18. *Little children*, says he, *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness is righteous— But he that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of*

God doth not commit sin ; i. e. as I explained it before, he does not habitually sin in the general tenor of his practice, so as to make sin his distinguishing character ; *for his seed remaineth in him ;* that is, the principles of grace, implanted in him in regeneration, are immortal, and will never suffer him to give himself up to sin, as formerly ; *and he cannot sin because he is born of God :* his being born of God happily disables him forever from abandoning himself to sin again.—*In this the children of God are manifest ; and the children of the devil ;* that is, this is the grand distinguishing characteristic existing between them, *Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* 1 Jo. iii. 7—10. You see then a holy practice is one of the most certain signs of regeneration ; and, therefore, in vain do such pretend to it, or boast of high attainments in inward experimental religion, who are not holy in all manner of conversation, and do not live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world.

By this time, I hope, my brethren, you understand what it is to be born again. And now, upon a review of the subject, there are several things of importance, which I would submit to your consideration.

First, I leave you now to consider, whether baptism be the same thing with regeneration, or the new birth, in the scripture sense. I grant that baptism is a sacramental sign of regeneration, just as the Lord's Supper is a sacramental sign of the body and blood of Christ ; and, therefore, baptism may be called regeneration, by the same figure which Christ uses when he says of the bread, *This is my body.* In this metonymical sense, this method of speaking has been used by many great and good men : and when they call baptism regeneration, they only mean, that it is an outward sign of it, just as the sacramental bread, for the same reason, is called the body of Christ. Were it always used in this sense, it would hardly be worth while to take notice of it as an impropriety ; though, I must confess, I cannot find the same form of speech indisputably used concerning baptism in the Bible. But when men are taught that the whole of that regeneration, or new birth, which the scripture requires as absolutely necessary to salvation, means no more than just being baptized ; and when they that have been baptized, begin to think that they have no more to do with the new birth, the error is too dangerous to be passed over in silence. I shall just lead you into a track of thought, by which you may easily make yourselves judges in this controversy. If baptism be

regeneration in the scripture sense, then, whatever the scripture says concerning persons regenerated, born again, or created anew, will also hold true concerning persons baptized. This is so plain a principle, that it is hard to make it plainer ; for if baptism be the same with regeneration, the new birth, or the new creation, then the same things may be said of it. Proceeding upon this obvious princ iple, let us make the trial in a few instances. It may be truly said of him that is born of God, in the scripture sense, that he does not habitually sin, &c. Now substitute baptized, instead of born of God, and consider how it will read, " Every one that is baptized sinneth not ; but he that is baptized keepeth himself ; and the evil one toucheth him not." Has this the appearance of truth ? Do not all of you know so much of the conduct of many who have been baptized, as to see this is most notoriously false ? for where can we find more audacious sinners upon earth, than many who have been baptized ! Let us make another trial. *Whosoever is born of God*, in the scripture sense, *overcometh the world.* But will it hold true, that whosoever is baptized, overcometh the world ? *If any man be in Christ*, in the scripture sense, *he is a new creature ; old things are past away, and all things are become new.* But how will it sound if you read, *If any man be baptized, he is a new creature : old things are past away, and all things are become new ?* Does baptism universally make such a change in the subject, as that it may, with any tolerable propriety be called a new creation ?—I might easily make the same experiment with many other passages of scripture ; but these may suffice as a specimen. And now, must it not be as evident as any mathematical demonstration, that regeneration, or the new birth, in the scripture sense, is something else, something more divine, more intrinsical, more transformative of the whole man, than baptism ? That man must labour to be deceived, who can work up himself to believe, after such a representation of the case, that if he has been baptized, he has all that regeneration which is necessary to his admission into the kingdom of heaven. I know no absurdity parallel to it, except the doctrine of transubstantiation, the characteristical absurdity of the church of Rome. Because Christ, in the distribution of the elements in the Eucharist, said of the bread, *This is my body*, putting the sign for the thing signified, therefore Papists conclude, the bread is substantially the very same with the body of Christ signified by it, though it still retains all the sensible properties of bread. Some protestants

have fallen into the same error as to the other sacrament of baptism, and that with less plausibility. I can find no scripture that says of baptism, " This is regeneration :" and yet, they insist upon it, that it is the very thing ; and make the sign and the thing signified one and the same.

Let me borrow a very plain and popular, and yet substantial argument from Limborch. " The great design of Christ's coming into the world was, to renew and regenerate men ; this is a work worthy of his own immediate hand." And yet we are told, *Jesus baptised not, but his disciples.* John iv. 2. " A plain evidence that he made a distinction between baptism and regeneration. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, *I thank God that I have baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.* 1 Cor. i. 14. But if baptism be regeneration, his meaning must be, I thank God that I regenerated none of you. But is this cause of thanksgiving ? Could he give thanks to God that he had not regenerated any of them ? *Christ*, says he, *sent me not to baptize.* But can we think Christ did not send the chief of the apostles to promote the great work of regeneration ? He elsewhere calls himself their spiritual father, *for*, says he, *in Christ Jesus I have begotten you, through the gospel.* 1 Cor iv. 15. But if baptism be the new birth, he could not have been their father, or begotten them, unless he had baptized them. From which it is evident, that St. Paul made a great difference between baptism and regeneration."

Therefore, let no man deceive you with vain words. Baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, which you should think highly of ; but do not put it out of its place, by substituting it for quite another thing. Believe it, this is not that kind of regeneration which you must be the subjects of, if you would enter into the kingdom of God.

Another thing which I would now leave to your consideration is, whether regeneration, or the new birth, in the sense I have explained it, be not a rational, noble thing ? And whether so great a change in a man's temper and conduct may not emphatically be called a new birth ? When a man is born again, the ruins of his nature are repaired, and every noble and divine grace and virtue are implanted in his heart. His heart is made capable of generous sensations ; his understanding has suitable views of the most interesting and sublime objects ; and his temper and behaviour are rightly formed towards God and man. In short,

the mean, depraved, earth-born creature, is made an infant-angel; nay, St. Peter tells you, *he is made partaker of the divine nature.* 2 Pet. i. 4. What a glorious and surprising change is this! Should you see a clod of earth rising from under your feet, and brightening into a sun, it would not be so glorious a transformation. This change gives a man the very temper of heaven, and prepares him for the enjoyments and employments of that sacred region.

Therefore, *marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.* Do not gaze and wonder at me, as if I told you some strange, new, absurd thing, when I tell you, you must be regenerated in the manner I have explained, if ever you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Consult your own reason and experience, and they will tell you, that as heaven is the region of perfect holiness, and as you are indisputably corrupted, depraved creatures, you must be so changed, as to be made holy; or in other words, you must be born again, before you can enjoy the happiness of that holy place: or consult the Bible, which you must own to be true, or own yourselves to be the most gross hypocrites in professing the christian religion; consult your Bible, I say, and you will find the absolute necessity of being born again asserted in the strongest terms. Need I remind you of the solemn asseveration of Christ in my context, *verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven?* The same blessed lips have assured us, that, *except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into his kingdom.* Matt. xviii. 2. St. Paul speaks in the same strain: *If any man be in Christ*, as we all must be before we can be saved by him, *he is a new creature, &c. We are his workmanship*, says he, *created in Christ Jesus to good works.* Eph. ii. 10. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but the new creature.* All external forms of religion, whether Jewish or christian, are of no avail, without this new creation. Gal. vi. 15. This is also more than intimated in that comprehensive promise of the old testament, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. *A new heart will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you, &c.* And are not these repeated declarations sufficient to convince you of the necessity of this great change? Will you any more marvel, when you are told, you must be born again? No; rather marvel to hear the contrary: it may make you wonder indeed, to be told, that an unholy sinner, without any change, is fit for

the presence of an holy God ; fit to relish the holy enjoyments of heaven : and capable of being happy in what is directly contrary to his nature. This would be strange, absurd doctrine indeed ! and wherever you hear it, you may justly wonder at it, and despise such nonsense.

Now if this be true, that *except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, then it will follow, that just as many persons in this assembly as have been born again, just so many are in a state of favour with God, and prepared for the happiness of heaven. And, on the other hand, just as many as are unregenerate, just so many lie dead in sin, under the wrath of God, and liable to everlasting misery. Let each of you particularly admit this conviction : " If I am not born again, I have not the least ground to hope for happiness in my present state."

Upon this follows another inquiry, of the utmost importance ; and that is, Whether you have ever experienced the blessed change of the new birth ? Have your views, your dispositions, and your conduct been changed in the manner described ? and can you lay claim to those distinguishing characters of a regenerate soul, which have been mentioned ? Pause, and think seriously ; recollect your past experiences ; look into your own hearts ; observe the tenor of your practice ; and from the whole, endeavour to gather an honest answer to this grand question, " Have I ever been born again ?"

If you can answer this in your favour, St. Peter will tell you the happy consequence ; and I shall only desire you to read those most comfortable verses, 1 Pet. i. 3—6. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time ; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*

But if, on the other hand, you find you have never been born again, what is to be done ? Must you lie still in that condition ? or should you try to get out of it ? I am sure my design in endeavouring to let you see your condition, is, that you may escape out of it and be happy ; and if you are so kind to yourselves as to concur with me in this design, I hope, through divine grace, we shall succeed. This introduces the next inquiry, namely,

II. Who is the Author of this divine change, called the new birth ?

The change is so great, so noble, and divine, that from thence alone we may infer it can be produced only by divine power. And the nature of man, in its present state, is so corrupt and weak, that it is neither inclined nor able to produce it. It is also uniformly ascribed to God in the sacred writings. The regenerate soul is repeatedly said to be born of God ; *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* John i. 13. *All things are become new*, says St. Paul, *and all things* (that is, all these new things) *are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift*, says St. James, *is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights—who of his own will hath begotten us with the word of truth.* James i. 17, 18. The Spirit is repeatedly mentioned as the author of the new birth, in the chapter where my text lies. This may suffice for the truth of so plain a point.

Here then, sinners, you see to whom you must look for this blessing. You can no more regenerate yourselves, than you could beget yourselves at first. And this you must be deeply sensible of. But he that made you at first is able to new-make you, and to repair his own workmanship, which you have demolished. And it is he who has actually changed many a heart in our guilty world.—Here the next inquiry comes in very seasonably, namely,

III. In what way does this divine agent produce this change ?

He is pleased to use such a variety, as to circumstances, that I cannot take time to describe them. But as to the substance of the work, which is the same in all adults, he generally carries it on in the following manner. The first step is, to convince the sinner of his need of this change, by discovering to him his guilt and danger, and particularly the universal corruption of his nature. He is roused out of a state of stupid security by an affecting view of the holiness of God, of the purity of his law, of the terror of its penalty, of the great evil of sin, and of his own exposedness to the divine pleasure upon the account of it. Upon this he becomes sad and serious, uneasy in his mind, and anxious about his condition. He endeavours to reform his life ; he prays, and uses the other means of grace with earnestness unknown before. And when he has gone on in this course for some time,

he begins perhaps to flatter himself, that now he is in a safe condition. But alas! he does not yet know the worst of himself. Therefore the holy Spirit opens his eyes to see the inward universal corruption of his whole soul, and that a mere outward reformation is far from being a sufficient cure of a disease so inveterate. Hereupon the awakened sinner betakes himself to the use of the means of grace with redoubled vigour and earnestness, and strives to change the principles of action within. But alas! he finds his heart is a stubborn thing, and altogether unmanageable to him; and after repeated strivings to no purpose, he is effectually convinced of his own inability, and the absolute necessity of the exertion of divine power to make him truly good. Therefore he lies at the throne of grace, as a poor, anxious, helpless sinner, entirely at mercy, and unable to relieve himself. It would take up more time than I can allow, to describe the various exercises, the anxious fears, and eager pantings, the strong cries and tears of a soul in this condition. What I have hinted may put such of you in mind of them, as have never been the subjects of them. While the sinner lies in this desponding situation, it pleases God to pity him. Now the important hour is come, when the old man must be crucified; when the divine and immortal principles must be implanted in a heart full of sin; and when the dead sinner must begin to live a holy and divine life. The great God instantaneously changes the whole soul, and gives it a new, a heavenly turn. In short, now is wrought that important change, which I have already described, which is called the new birth, and denominates the man a new creature.

Here again you may furnish yourselves with materials for self-examination. If you have been born again, you have thus felt the pangs of a new birth, and seen your guilty, sinful, and dangerous condition in a true light. And can you put your hand upon your heart, and say, "Here is the heart that has been the subject of this operation?"

Hence also may be gathered some proper directions for such as are in a state of nature, how to attain the new birth.

Endeavour to be thoroughly acquainted with the corruption of your nature: it is from this that the necessity of a new birth proceeds.

Be fully convinced of the indispensable necessity of this change to your salvation.

Break off from, and forsake whatever tends to obstruct the new birth; as excessive worldly cares, bad company, and in short, all sin.

Seriously use all the means of grace; as, earnest prayer, attentive hearing of the word, &c.

Persevere in so doing, till your endeavours are crowned with success. And particularly, do not grow impatient of those anxieties and fears that will at first attend your pursuit.

These short hints may suffice by way of direction, if you are sincerely desirous of being directed. And what do you determine to do? Will you not resolve to seek after this important change, upon which your eternal All depends? O! let us part to-day fully determined upon this, that we will implore the power and mercy of God to create in us clean hearts, and renew within us right spirits.

Sermon 49.

THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOULS OF MEN CONSIDERED.

GAL. II. 20. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

THE principal design of St. Paul in this epistle, is to assert his divine mission, in opposition to the insinuations of the judaizing seducers that had intruded into the Galatian church; and to prove the justification of a sinner to be only through the merit of Christ's righteousness, and the instrumentality of faith. To confirm the latter he argues, Gal. ii. 15, 16, from the case of the apostles and Jewish christians in general: *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* And Gal. ii. 19, he explicitly declares his own case in particular, as agreeing with theirs. *I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;* that is, by the knowledge of the perfection of the law, as to its extent and spirituality; I am utterly unhinged and thrown off from all dependence on the works of the law for justification,

and from expecting strength to yield obedience to be conveyed, according to the covenant of works ;—and God's design in bringing me off from this dependence, and mine in relinquishing it, is not that I may turn libertine, and cast off all obligations to obedience, but that I may, by strength derived from Christ, devote myself wholly to him, and make my life a series of obedience to his will.

He goes on relating his own case in the text ; in which you may observe these truths :

First, " That believers are endowed with spiritual activity ; or, that they are enabled to serve God, and perform good works." This is intimated by two expressions, *I am crucified*, and, *I live* ; which, though they seem contradictory, do really mean the same thing. *I am crucified*, signifies the mortification of indwelling sin, the subduction and extirpation of corrupt principles and inclinations ; and he calls the mortification of these the crucifixion of himself, (*I am crucified*) because of their intimate inhesion with his very nature ; they were a sort of self to him. We have a like expression used, and explained by himself in Rom. vi. 6. *Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* Now the mortification of sin is a part of the service of God, at least a necessary pre-requisite. So the apostle reasons in Rom. vi. 2, 6, 11. *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.* The other expression, *I live*, signifies spiritual activity ; a vigorous, persevering serving of God ; a living unto God, (as it is explained ver. 19. and Rom. vi. 11.) Life, as ascribed to a rational being, imports not only a continuance in existence, in which sense inanimate things may be said to live, but especially a power of rational operation frequently exercised ;—and when attributed to a morally upright being, as such, it imports more than some kind of power of operation, namely, a vital principle of spiritual and holy operation, and the frequent, persevering exercise of it. Such a principle or power is very significantly called life, to denote its intimacy in the soul, its vivacity, and permanency.

Secondly, We may observe, that " the vital principle of holiness in believers, whereby they are enabled to serve God, is communicated to them through Christ only as a Mediator." This is intimated by that expression, *I am crucified with Christ ;* that is, sin is crucified in me by virtue of the crucifixion of Christ ; from

the merits of his death my strength to subdue sin results : and the mortification of it is the certain consequent of his sufferings, because thereby divine grace was purchased and insured for his chosen, to be communicated at the time appointed. To the same purpose he speaks in Gal. vi. 14. Far be it from me *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom* [or by which] *the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.* This is also asserted in the emphatical epanorthosis, *I live : yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* : that is, spiritual life is formally in me, but it is not self-originated ; it does not result from my natural principles, (which are so essential to me, that I may represent them under the personal pronoun I) but was first implanted, and is still supported and cherished by the power and grace of God through Christ ; and it is in every respect so dependent upon him, and his influence is so intimately diffused through my soul, that I may say, *Christ liveth in me.* A like expression is used in Col. iii. 3, 4. *Christ is our life.*

Thirdly, We may take notice, " that believers receive supplies from Christ for the maintenance and nourishment of their spiritual life." *The life which I now live* (or, as it might be rendered more significantly, *what* I now live) *in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

So that the substance of the text is exhausted in these three doctrines, " That all true believers are endowed with an ability to serve God : That this ability was first communicated, and is still maintained through Christ only : and, That it is by faith they derive supplies from him, for the support and nourishment thereof."

You may observe I here reason from a particular to an universal, and infer, that because these doctrines are true with respect to St. Paul, therefore they are true with respect to believers in general ; and the scope of the text warrants this method of reasoning in this instance, which is confessedly fallacious in other cases ; for St. Paul here introduces his own case with a design to represent and illustrate the case of believers in common ; which he could not reasonably have done, had not theirs been substantially the same with his in these respects. Besides, he declares these things of himself, not upon the account of any circumstances peculiar to himself, which might appropriate them to him ; and therefore, though so eminent a saint might have peculiar degrees

of them, yet as to their reality and kind, they equally belong to all true christians.

Nothing can be more profitable, nothing more necessary, than right notions about spiritual life. It is the main business of those that have it not, to seek it, and of those that have it to cherish it; but how can they do either, if they know not what it is? Without it our religion is vain; we cannot serve the living God here, nor enjoy him hereafter; we are exposed to the eternal agonies of the second death, and our souls are pining under a spiritual decay, that will at length consume our vitals. How necessary then is spiritual life! And the necessity of the thing infers the necessity of the knowledge of it. The profession of it is the source of all vital religion; it is the health of the spirit; the ornament and perfection of the human nature; the grand pre-requisite to everlasting happiness; the dawn of celestial glory; is it not then incomparably profitable? And must not the right knowledge of it be so too? Yet some are entirely ignorant of it; others, who say they see, are widely mistaken about its nature, the time and manner of its communication, its subjects, the author and meritorious cause of it, and the way in which it is supported and cherished: and therefore, for the instruction of the ignorant, the rectification of wrong sentiments, and the confirmation of our minds in the truth, it may be expedient briefly to attempt the solution of the following inquiries.

I. Wherein spiritual life consists?

II. When it is communicated?

III. Whether it be instantaneously communicated, or gradually acquired by repeated acts?

IV. Who are the subjects of it? or, in what extent is it communicated?

V. In what sense is it communicated and supported through Christ?

VI. How faith derives supplies from him for its support and nourishment?

I. "Wherein does spiritual life consist?" This inquiry, though necessary both to inform your minds and to repel the charge of unintelligibleness, so frequently alleged against this doctrine, yet is exceeding difficult, both because of the mysteriousness of the thing in itself, and because of the blindness of the minds of those that are not endowed with it. It is mysterious in itself, as every kind of life is. The effects and many of the prop-

erties of animal life are plain, but what animal life is in itself is an inquiry too sublime for the most philosophic and soaring mind. Now spiritual life still approaches nearer to the life of the divine Being, that boundless ocean of incomprehensible mysteries, and consequently exceeds our capacity more than any other. But besides, such is the blindness of unregenerate souls, that they cannot receive or know the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14, and therefore what is knowable by enlightened minds concerning spiritual life, cannot be apprehended with suitable clearness by them. The power of understanding it seems to be the effect of the thing understood, and cannot exist separately from it. So it is in other kinds of life. Nothing but reason can inform what is a rational life. Let the faculties of the most sagacious animal be ever so much polished, it can receive no ideas of it. So *he that believeth, hath the witness in himself*, 1 John v. 10. *and none but himself can hear its testimony*.* But suppose we could form clear ideas, we should still be at a loss for clear expressions. I have a clear idea of many of the appetites, passions, and motions of animal life; but words may fail me to express them intelligibly to another, especially if he has no experience of them himself. It need not, therefore, afford you any surprise, if after all that shall be said to illustrate this point, it still remains obscure. To design any more than to give you some faint glimmerings, some half formed, inadequate conceptions of it, would be a piece of arrogant vanity.

Now spiritual life supposes a living spiritual principle, and it implies a disposition and a power to serve God, or of holy operation.

1. It supposes a living spiritual principle. There can be no life, no vital actions, without a vital principle, from whence they flow: *e. g.* there can be no animal life, no animal sensations and motions, without a principle of animal life. By a vital principle I mean that from which life and its actions and passions immediately proceed: *e. g.* in the formation of our souls a principle of reason is concreated with them, which is the source, the immediate cause of their life and rational operations. I call this a princi-

* I do not mean that the unregenerate have the same degree of incapacity in the one case as beasts have in the other, but only that the one is as really incapable as the other. Reason in the unregenerate approaches nearer to spiritual life than the powers of animal life do to reason, and yet comes entirely short of it.

ple, because it is the beginning of life. Now spiritual life must suppose a principle of holiness. A principle of life of any kind will not suffice ; it must be particularly and formally a holy principle ; for life and all its operations will be of the same kind with the principle from which they proceed. Now a holy principle is something distinct from and superadded to the mere natural principle of reason. By virtue of this a man can think and will ; but experience assures us, that thinking and willing, abstractedly considered, or under sundry modifications which they are capable of, are very different from thinking and willing in a holy manner, or with those peculiar modifications which spiritual operations bear. I can will an indifferent or evil object, if it appears to me as good ; but my willing that which is morally good as such, is a very different act ; and the principle from which the former act with its modification proceeds, may not be capable of producing the latter so modified. This may be illustrated by the case of the devils and their associates of the human race. They still retain the principle of reason, and are capable of thinking and willing ; otherwise they would be incapable of torment, for without consciousness there could be no sense of misery, and consciousness implies thinking : and without willing there can be no desire of happiness, or abhorrence of penal evil ; but yet they are utterly incapable of thinking and willing in a manner morally good, and therefore a principle of holiness must be something distinct from a mere rational principle.

It may be urged, " That all the acts of spiritual life may be resolved into the acts of reason, namely, thinking and willing in a holy manner ; and therefore the principle of the former is the same with that of the latter." In answer to this, I grant that the principle of reason, when it implies a power of putting forth such acts, and about such objects, as holiness includes ; when it implies a power of knowing and choosing those things which the divine law requires us to know and choose, that then it is the same with a principle of spiritual life ; and this is the case of such reasonable beings as still continue in their original uprightness : but the principle of reason may be so maimed as to lose this power, and yet not lose its nature ; that is, it may become incapable of that manner of operation which spiritual life produces, and yet continue a principle of reason still. This is evident from the case of infernal spirits, formerly mentioned. Now the principle of spiritual life supplies this moral defect ; it adds

to reason a capacity of exercising itself suitably about spiritual things. Such a capacity is a separable adjunct of reason, and by the corruption of our natures it is actually separated from it: and consequently, till it be superadded to our rational powers, we are incapable of spiritual operation; I mean such a manner of spiritual operation as is morally good and acceptable to God. Our rational powers indeed can still exercise themselves about divine things, but then it is not in a fit manner: and therefore when a sinner is quickened by efficacious grace, a power of acting in a fit manner with respect to these things is superadded to his rational powers; and before this there is nothing in him out of which such a power may be educed.

To illustrate this matter, let us suppose a man deprived of the faculty of memory, and yet to continue rational, (as he might in a low degree) according to this supposition, he will be always incapable of an act of memory, however strong his powers of perception, volition, &c. may be, till the power of exercising his reason in that particular way which is called remembering, be conferred upon him. So let a sinner's mere natural powers be ever so much refined and polished, yet, if there be no principle of spiritual life distinct from them infused, he will be everlastingly incapable of living religion. This gracious principle is called *the seed of God*, 1 John iii. 9, to intimate, that as the seed of vegetables is the first principle of the plant, and of its vegetative life, so is this of spiritual life, and all its vital acts.

2. Spiritual life implies a disposition to a holy operation, an inward propensity, a spontaneous inclination towards holiness; a *willing that which is good.* Rom. vii. 18. Every kind of life has some peculiar innate tendencies, sympathies, and antipathies: so animal life implies a natural inclination to food, to move at proper seasons, &c. There is a savour, a relish for divine things, as essential to spiritual life as our natural gusts and relishes are to natural life. Hence gracious desires are often signified in scripture under the metaphors of hungering and thirsting; and to this St. Peter expressly alludes; *as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* 1 Pet. ii. 2. By virtue of this disposition, believers set their affections on things above, Col. iii. 2. they relish, they savour, they affect things above. This is the spiritual-mindedness, the savour of the spirit, which is spiritual life; and stands in opposition to the relish and propensions of mere nature. Rom. viii. 6. By virtue

of this the strongest bent of their souls is God-ward; they tend, they gravitate towards him as their proper centre. Their *desire is unto him and to the remembrance of his name.* Isa. xxvi. 8. *Their soul follows hard after him.* Psalm lxiii. 8. By virtue of this they incline to keep all God's commandments; they have an inward tendency to obedience; they love God's law; they *delight in it after the inner man*, Psalm. cxix. 97. Rom. vii. 22, and their love and delight will habitually sway them to observe it: religion is their element, their choice. It is not in them forced and unnatural, as all those operations are which do not proceed from an intrinsic principle; and that reluctancy and indisposedness which they sometimes unhappily feel in themselves to religious duties, is preternatural with respect to this spiritual disposition; as the loathing of healthful food is to the human body: it proceeds from a disorder, a weakness in their spiritual life, occasioned by the strugglings and transient prevalency of contrary principles: it is owing to the lustings of the flesh against the spirit. Again, Their obedience is not servile and mercenary, resulting merely from the apprehension of the misery which will ensue upon disobedience; but it is generous and filial, proceeding from a convictive view of the intrinsic reasonableness, congruity, and amiableness of the duties of holiness; from the pleasure and satisfaction which the performance of them, under this view, naturally produces; (so a man is excited to eat, not merely by his apprehension of the necessity of it for the support of his body, but also by the pleasure he finds in the very action) and from a sense of the divine authority enjoining those duties. By this the genuine acts of spiritual life are infallibly distinguished from that low and ignoble devotion which flows from custom, education, horrors of conscience, and all the principles of mere nature.

It is true indeed, some persons by nature, and consequently without this supernatural disposition, may incline to and delight in sundry things that, as to the matter of them, are religious duties. So (*e. g.*) some are naturally averse to intemperance; and sobriety is inwrought in their very constitutions. Yet still this gracious disposition is distinguished from such a natural inclination by these two marks: The first implies a distinct reference to and a sense of the authority of the divine Lawgiver as enjoining those duties, and prompts a person to observe them formally as duties, as acts of obedience; but the latter prompts to the ob-

servance of them, considering them as things agreeable to the person's natural temper, without any distinct reference to God; and so they are rather acts of self-gratification than of obedience to the divine authority; and the person would incline to them, if they were not commanded at all. They are duties materially in themselves, but not formally, as performed by him: a regard to the authority of God, which is the constitutive form of obedience, is left out. A generous temper may incline to give alms; for the Lord's sake, is omitted. (2.) Spiritual life disposes to all duties of religion and acts of holiness universally. It delights in holiness as such, and regards the authority of the law for itself; and consequently, whatever has the nature of holiness, whatever has the sanction of divine authority, it cannot but affect and relish, even though it should be very contrary to a man's natural inclinations and temporal advantage. But a natural propension is always partial and limited, and inclines to some duties only, neglecting others of equal or greater importance, which thwart the man's corrupt propensions. In a word, such a one's religion proceeds from the very same disposition that his sins proceed from, namely, a disposition to please himself. Hence it is always a maimed, imperfect, half-formed thing; it has not that amiable symmetry and uniformity, that congruous proportion and connection of parts, which are the ornament and distinguishing characteristic of that religion which flows from a heart universally disposed to holiness.

3. Spiritual life implies a power of holy operation. A heavenly vigour, a divine activity animates the whole soul. It implies more than an inefficacious disposition, a dull, lazy velleity, productive of nothing but languid wishes. So every kind of life implies a power of operation suitable to its nature. Animal life (*e. g.*) has not only an innate propensity, but also a natural power to move, to receive and digest food, &c. *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, Isa. xl. 31. that is, they have strength given them; renewed and increased by repeated acts, in the progress of sanctification. They are *strengthened with might, by the Spirit in the inner man.* Eph. iii. 16. I do not mean that spiritual life is always sensible and equally vigorous; alas! it is subject to many languishments and indispositions: but I mean there is habitually in a spiritual man a power, an ability for serving God, which, when all pre-requisites concur, and hinderances are removed, is capable of putting forth acts of holiness, and which does

actually exert itself frequently. So animal life is subject to many disorders, which weaken its powers of operation, but yet still it retains those powers ; and they are in some measure active, even under the greatest indisposition, at least in resisting the disorder, though perhaps with faint struggles. Again, I do not mean an independent power, which is so self-active as to need no quickening energy from the divine Spirit to bring it into act, but a power capable of acting under the animating influences of grace, which, as to their reality, are common to all believers, though they are communicated in different degrees to different persons. There is no need of the infusion of a new power, which the Spirit might actuate ; but they have a power already, which needs nothing but the suitable concurrence of other causes to educe it into act. So the power of reason is not independent, so as to be capable of operation without the concurrence of divine providence, common to mankind, to quicken it into act : yet it is a power of reason still, because it is capable of rational acts, under common providential influence. But should we suppose a beast the object of that influence, it would still continue incapable of rational acts, till a rational power be implanted in it. The illustration itself directs us to the application of it.

Thus I have briefly shewn you wherein spiritual life consists ; but I am afraid it may be still wrapt in obscurity from the eyes of some. And indeed it would require longer time, larger extent, and greater abilities to reflect sufficient light on so mysterious a point. Before we lose sight of this head, let us improve it to these purposes :

Let us improve it as a caution against this common mistake, viz. that our mere natural powers, under the common aids of divine grace, polished and refined by the institutions of the gospel, are a sufficient principle of holiness, without the addition of any new principle. You see a principle of spiritual life is supernatural ; it is a divine, heaven-born thing ; it is the seed of God; a plant planted by our heavenly Father. But alas ! how many content themselves with a self-begotten holiness ! They have formed to themselves a system of natural self-sprung religion, (I mean that it is natural, originally, and subjectively, though it be pretended to be divine objectively, because its patrons acknowledge objective revelation) in this they acquiesce as sufficient, as though they knew not that *that which is born of the flesh is flesh.* The cogitativeness of matter appears to me a notion very like

this ; for I think it might be demonstrated as clearly, that our mere natural powers, in our present lapsed state, without the infusion of any divine, supernatural principle, are incapable of living, evangelical holiness ; as it can, that mere matter, without the superaddition of a principle entirely distinct from it, is capable of thinking, however much it be polished, or however differently it be modified.

Let us also improve what has been said, to remove another equally common and pernicious error, namely, That gospel-holiness consists merely in a series of acts materially good. Some imagine that all the actions they do, which are materially lawful and a part of religion, have just so much of holiness in them : and as they multiply such actions, their sanctification increases in their imagination. But alas ! do they not know, that a principle, a disposition, a power of holy acting must precede, and be the source of all holy acts ! That a new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put within us, before we can *walk in God's statutes and keep his judgments, and do them !* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. That we must be created in Jesus Christ unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. before we can walk in them ! That *the love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. v. 5, before we can love Him ! I do not say, that they that are void of spiritual life should not attempt to perform religious duties in the best manner they can, by virtue of their natural powers ; for this is undoubtedly their duty, both because their sin is less when only the manner of their actions is sinful, than when the matter and manner too are sinful ; and because God, who has a right to appoint what methods he pleases for the collation of his own favours, has constituted this as the way for them to obtain spiritual life. But I say religious and moral duties, however frequently and perseveringly performed, are not evangelical holiness, when they are not done from a gracious supernatural principle : they are but spurious fruits growing from the wild root of depraved nature ; and we had best not please ourselves with the view of them, as though they were the fruits of holiness, lest we be consumed at last as fruitless and noxious briars and thorns.

Further, Let us improve our account of spiritual life, to inform us of a very considerable difference betwixt a mere moral and a spiritual life ; or evangelical holiness and morality. Spiritual life is of a divine original ; evangelical holiness flows from a supernatural principle ; but mere morality is natural ; it is but

the refinement of our natural principles, under the aids of common grace, in the use of proper means; and consequently it is obtainable by unregenerate men. Hence the same act may be differently denominated, according to the principles from which it proceeds; that may be a piece of mere morality in one, who acts from natural principles only, which is an act of holiness in another, who acts from a principle of spiritual life. So an alms, when given from a gracious principle, and for Christ's sake, is a gracious act; but when given from a principle of natural generosity only, it deserves no higher name than that of mere morality.—A mistake in this is a rock we may tremble to look at, and ought anxiously to avoid! for alas! how many have been dashed to pieces upon it!

Again, We may improve what has been said, to convince us, that a life of formality, listlessness, and inactivity, is far from being a spiritual life. Where these things are habitual and predominant, they are infallible symptoms of spiritual death. It is true (as has been already observed) believers are subject to many sickly qualms and frequent indispositions; yea, at times, their languishments are such, that the operations of the vital principle within them are hardly discernible to themselves or others; and the vigour of their devotion, in their most sprightly hours, is checked and borne down by the body of death under which they groan. Yet still, there is an inextinguishable spark of life within, which scatters a glimmering light in the thickest darkness, and sometimes shines with illustrious brightness. The pulse of the spirit, though weak and irregular, still beats. There is an active power that reluctates and struggles against the counterstrivings of the flesh: that under the greatest languor, puts forth some weak efforts, some faint essays, and under the actuating influence of the divine Spirit, invigorates the soul *to mount up with wings like an eagle, to run without wearying, and walk without fainting.* And O! the joy, the pleasure of such heavenly activity! We therefore may write *Tekel* on the dull, inoperative religion of many; it serves for no end, but to prove them dead in trespasses and sins. The design of the whole dispensation of God's grace towards fallen sinners, is their vivification to holiness, *that they may bring forth fruit unto God*, Rom. vii. 4; and sure, where that design is not obtained, there can be no true religion. Let us therefore beware lest we should have a name to live, while we are dead.

Sermon 50.

THE DIVINE LIFE IN THE SOULS OF MEN CONSIDERED.

GAL. II. 20.—*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

We proceed to inquire,

II. WHEN spiritual life is communicated?—To this the scriptures direct us to answer, That it is communicated in that change which is generally called Regeneration, or Effectual Calling. This is more than intimated by the expressions used to signify the first communication of it. When spiritual life is infused, then it is that God is said to *beget us again to a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. *to beget us of his own will*, James i. 18. *to quicken us who were dead in sin*, Eph. ii. 5 to *give us a new heart, and put a new spirit within us; to take away the stony heart, and give an heart of flesh*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. and we are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. *born again*, John iii. 3. *born or begotten of God*, John i. 13. 1 John iii. 9. Now it is evident that these metaphorical expressions signify what is commonly called regeneration, and that they express the first implantation of spiritual life. Several of them contain a direct allusion to the first communication of animal and human life, as regeneration or begetting, regeneration or being begotten again, creation, &c. And since these, taken literally, signify the first communication of natural life, they must, when used metaphorically and spiritually, signify the first communication of spiritual life. Life before generation, creation, &c. is an absurdity; and generation, creation, &c. without the communication of life suitable to the nature of the being generated, created, &c. is also an absurdity. The other expressions, as *quickening us while dead in trespasses and sins*, *giving a new heart*, and the like, even literally signify this.

Hence, by way of improvement, we may be instructed to avoid a common mistake; namely, "That a power of living to God is universally conferred upon mankind in creation: and therefore that there is no need of a new supernatural principle to be infused, but only of the concurrence of common providence, and the

institutes of the gospel, to polish and refine our natural principles. And some say, "That God in creation infuses spiritual life into all, on account of Christ's dying for them; and that if it be given without the merit of the recipient, it may as properly be ascribed to divine grace when it is a natural endowment bestowed in creation, as it would be if it were a supernatural gift communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to that of creation."

In order effectually to subvert this notion, consider, 1. If spiritual life were communicated in creation, there would be no propriety or significancy in the expressions used to denote the communication of it. There would be no need of a new, a second birth, if we were spiritually alive by virtue of our first birth. Were we holy by virtue of our first creation, what necessity of being *created in Christ Jesus*, or of being made *new creatures?* 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. There could be no opposition between the *old man and the new*. Rom. vi. 6. Eph. iv. 22, 24. Col. iii. 9, 10. The dispositions concreated with us cannot be called a new man.—2. The implantation of spiritual life is not only posterior to creation, but also to corrupt principles, which are innate. We are first *dead in sin before we are quickened*, Eph. ii. 5. we have a *stony heart*, which must be taken away before a *heart of flesh* is given, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Such expressions undoubtedly signify and act posterior to, and consequently distinct from creation.—3. The implantation of a principle of spiritual life is eminently an act of special grace, which the concreation of our natural endowments is never said to be. *The washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, is an act of mercy and the effect of the *kindness and love of God our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)* Eph. ii. 4, 5. It is according to God's *abundant mercy, that we are begotten again unto a lively hope*. 1 Pet. i. 3. But what need I multiply instances? The entire tenor of the gospel directs us to ascribe the regeneration and sanctification of sinners to distinguishing and peculiar grace. But though our natural powers are the free communications of divine goodness, yet we are never said to be "created according to the grace and mercy of God." It is not agreeable to the sacred dialect to call the powers of reason, vision, &c. "the gifts of grace," in the same sense that spiritual life is so called: nay, I cannot

find that our natural powers are ascribed to mercy, grace, free grace, at all; and it seems more congruous to ascribe them to other perfections of the Deity, as creative wisdom, power and goodness. To this I may add, that spiritual life is always represented as communicated "through Christ as Mediator, and for his sake;" but our natural endowments are not said to be given through him. *The Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour* Tit. iii. 5, 6. *We are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Christ once for all.* Heb. x. 10. *It is in Jesus Christ that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings.* Eph. i. 3. *He is made sanctification to us,* 1 Cor. i. 30. *and of his fulness we all receive.* John i. 16. But we are never said to be created for Christ's sake, or to be made rational creatures on the account of his righteousness. And when we are said to be created by him, it signifies by him as an efficient, not as a meritorious cause.

From all which it appears, that spiritual life in a fallen creature is wholly supernatural: it is of a divine extract, and heaven-born in a peculiar sense. The sons of God *are born of God, and not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.* If therefore any of us continue in our natural estate, we are dead in sin, however strict formalists or refined moralists we may be.—Let us inquire,

III. "Whether spiritual life be instantaneously communicated? Or, whether (as some allege) it be gradually acquired by repeated acts?"

Here let it be observed, that we are not inquiring, how spiritual life is nourished and confirmed? for that is undoubtedly done gradually, by repeated acts, correspondent to the nature of spiritual life, and perfective of it in the progress of sanctification, as the power of reason is improved by a series of suitable exercises; but our inquiry is, how it is first obtained? Whether it be communicated in the instant of regeneration, as the power of understanding is in creation? And to this I answer affirmatively, for the following reasons.

1. "It is a contradiction that it should be originally acquired by acting, or a series of acts; for that supposes that it exists, and does not exist, at the same time: as it acts, it exists; and as it is acquired by acting, it does not exist. It will perhaps be objected, "That it may be acquired by the repeated acts of another kind of life, namely, rational; or the exercises of our rational powers about spiritual objects." But this may be answered from

what was observed under the first head, namely, that a principle of spiritual life, is something distinct from and superadded to our natural powers. Now the acts of one kind of life, however often repeated, will never acquire a life of a quite different kind: *e. g.* The longest course, and the most frequent repetition of animal acts, will never acquire a principle of reason. Let a blind man hear ever so well, and ever so frequently, that will not acquire a visive faculty. So let our natural principles be exercised about spiritual objects with ever so much frequency and permanency, that will never acquire spiritual life. They are so depraved, that there remains nothing in them out of which it can be educed, without the communication of something supernatural. Be they ever so strong and active, they can contribute no more to our vivification, than the quick sensation of the auditory nerve can contribute to the acquisition of sight. Principles of action may be confirmed, and rendered more prompt to act, by frequent exercise; but can never be originally obtained that way.

2. The terms whereby the communication of spiritual life is signified, as begetting, creating, quickening, or raising the dead, &c. denote an instantaneous communication.

3. Spiritual life is represented as prior to and the source and principle of all acts of evangelical holiness: and consequently it cannot be gradually acquired by such acts, but must be implanted previously to the putting forth of any such acts; as reason is not acquired by reasoning, but is a pre-requisite and principle of all the acts of reason. We are *created in Christ Jesus*, to make us capable of *good works*. Eph. ii. 10. We must have *a new heart and a new spirit, and the Spirit of God be put within us, that we may walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. We must be *drawn of the Father*, must *hear and learn of him*, before we can *come to Christ*. John iv. 44, 45. God gives his people *one heart, and one way, that they may fear Him forever. He puts his fear in their hearts*, before they cease *to depart from Him.* Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Now if all acts of holiness be the effects of a vital principle of holiness previously infused, then this principle is not acquired by a course of actions, and consequently it is not gradually acquired, but instantaneously infused; for that which is not acquired by acting, is obtained by immediate communication from another, and therefore it does not take up time to obtain it, as a series of acts does. Again, There must be a first act of holiness; for if there be not a first, there cannot be a second, &c. Now since a principle of spiritu-

al life is the spring, and the beginning of all acts of holiness, it must be, in order of nature, prior to the first act of holiness : and consequently it is not gradually acquired by such acts, but precedes them all, and therefore must be instantaneously infused.

Hence we may see the vanity of that religion which is gained in the same manner that a man learns a trade, or an uncultivated mind becomes knowing and learned, namely, by the repeated exercises of our natural powers in use of proper means, and under the aids of common providence. We have seen that a principle of spiritual life is not a good act, nor a series of good acts, nor any thing acquirable by them, but the spring and origin of all good acts. Let us then, my brethren, try whether our religion will stand this test.

Hence also we may learn a considerable difference between what is commonly called Morality and Gospel-Holiness. The one is obtained, as other acquired habits are, by frequent and continued exercises ; the other proceeds from a principle divinely implanted.

IV. Our inquiry is, " Who are the subjects of spiritual life ? or, In what extent is it communicated ?

The answer to this is easy, from what has been already offered : for since it is communicated only in regeneration, then the regenerate only are the subjects of it ; and since all men are not regenerate, then all men are not the subjects of it. Again, Since it is something distinct from and superadded to our rational powers, then it cannot be proved that all that are endowed with rationality are the subjects of it. Again, since it is communicated by an act distinct from and posterior to creation, there is no reason to conclude that it is co-extended with creation, or with the bounds of humanity. And since all these things are so, we may safely conclude, negatively, that it is not communicated to mankind universally and positively ; that it is communicated to all the regenerate, and to them only. Hence result two corollaries.

1. That there is no such thing as universal grace sufficient to qualify all men to serve God acceptably, without the supernatural communication of distinguishing grace ; for *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* John iv. 24. Those acts which do not proceed from a principle of spiritual life, will no more be accounted by Him vital, spiritual acts, than the chattering of a parrot, or the seemingly rational

pranks of an ape, will pass with a man of sense for human actions: and without a principle of spiritual life there can be no spiritual acts, as there can be no rational acts without a principle of reason. And since, as has been shewn, spiritual life is not universally communicated, then there is no sufficient grace universally communicated; for the latter necessarily implies the former, and cannot be without it.

2. We may observe further, That the "best actions of the unregenerate are not properly and formally good, and acceptable to God." It is true their performing the duties of religion and virtue in the best manner they are capable of, is less displeasing to God than the wilful neglect of them, or the commission of the contrary sins, and therefore they should endeavour to perform them; but yet it cannot be said to be positively pleasing to him. It is not the act materially, or in itself, that is sinful, but formally, and as done by them, *e. g.* They do not sin as far as they pray, but as far as they pray in a sinful manner, without a gracious principle, without faith, and other requisites to acceptable prayer. *They ask and receive not, because they ask amiss.* James iv. 3. *So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.* Rom. viii. 8. A tremendous thought to the unregenerate! Their whole life is an entire series of provocation; one continued act of rebellion against the great King of Heaven.

V. Our next inquiry is, "In what sense is spiritual life communicated and supported through Christ.

To explain and illustrate this point, let these three things be considered.

1. That "by the sin of our first parents and representatives, our principle of spiritual life was forfeited, and the forfeiture is continued, and spiritual death brought on us by our personal sin."

That Adam was constituted the representative of his posterity, and consequently that his sin is imputed to them, I shall take for granted, not having time to prove it. And if this be granted, then we are destitute of spiritual life; for, that disobedience may be punished, consistently with reason and justice, by the judicial privation of our power to obey, cannot be denied, if these reasonable *postulata* be concealed: That it is consistent with the justice and goodness of the Deity to suspend the continuance of the powers of upright moral agency conferred upon his creatures, on the condition of their right improvement of them: That when such powers are abused and misimproved, they may justly be

withdrawn: And that, when withdrawn in consequence of their being forfeited by a criminal misimprovement, God is not obliged in justice to restore them. Now these *postulata* imply no contradiction, and, therefore, may have been matters of fact; and they are implied in the scripture representation of the circumstance of Adam and his posterity, as related to him; and therefore were matters of fact, and consequently Adam and his posterity, on the account of his sin, actually are, at least justly might be, deprived of spiritual life.

As to our personal sin, it contributes two ways to deprive us of spiritual life, morally and physically; morally, in the same sense that Adam's sin does, as it involves us in guilt, and so infers the judicial privation of the imperfect relics of our Maker's moral image; and physically, as every act, and especially a series of acts, naturally tends to strengthen and encourage the principle from whence they flow; to acquire that facility in acting which is called a habit; and to weaken and extirpate all contrary principles, and so indispose for the exertion of contrary acts.

Hence it follows that in order to the restoration of spiritual life, the moral influence of sin must be removed by making a competent satisfaction to divine justice, to redeem the blessing forfeited; and its physical influence obstructed by purchasing and communicating divine influences, to weaken and extirpate the principles of sin, and that fatal promptitude and facility of acting which is contracted by the frequent exercise of them; and to infuse an opposite principle of holiness, and mature it into an habit. And this introduces the other two things intended; and therefore,

2. The Lord Jesus, by his sufferings, made a "complete satisfaction to divine justice;" and thereby redeemed the blessing forfeited; and by the merit of his obedience, purchased divine influence for the extirpation of the principles of spiritual death which lurk in our natures, and the implantation of holiness. Hence the regeneration and sanctification, as well as the salvation of his people, are ascribed to his merits and death. We are *sanctified through the offering up of the body of Christ.* Heb. x 10. And *the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himself, without spot, to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Titus ii. 14. Hence our *old man* is said to be *crucified with him,* Rom. vii. 6. and we to be

quickened together with him. Col. ii. 13. Therefore it is only on the account of his righteousness that spiritual life is first given and afterwards maintained and cherished. God acts in the whole affair, as the God of grace, with a distinct reference to the mediation of Christ.

3 Christ, the Purchaser, is appointed also "the Communicator of spiritual life" to his people. *The Son quickeneth whom he will.* John v. 21. *He is exalted as a prince to give repentance to Israel.* Acts v. 31. *He is our life*, Col. iii. 3, 4, *and the Author and Finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. In a word, *all power in heaven and on earth is given to him*, Matt. xxix. 18. a sovereign empire of grace, founded in his own blood, is devolved upon him, and *He is given to be head over all things to his church*; Eph. i. 22, a head not only of government, but of quickening influence; for *from him all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.* Col. ii. 19. It is therefore by his own hands that all the blessings purchased by his blood are communicated.

Hence for the particular improvement of this head, let believers be taught to look to the Lord Jesus, the great Treasurer of heaven, for the supplies of his grace to support and nourish their spiritual life. Poor things! You are weak in yourselves, but his *grace is sufficient for you, and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.* "Ye are complete in him," therefore "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Come up out of the wilderness, leaning upon your beloved. Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart." Do not indulge a dastardly temper, nor harbour diffident and desponding fears: For, "have you not known? Have you not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." If you "compass yourselves with sparks of your own kindling," your devotions will be cold and languid, and a deadly chillness will benumb your spirit. Place yourselves, therefore, under the vivifying beams "of the Sun of righteousness, and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."

And let "the slain of the daughter of my people" apply to him for quickening grace. Behold, sinners! your Physician; cry after him, plead for him; plead for life. See the great

treasury of vivifying influence ; stand at the door knocking, begging and weeping, and never depart till you can say, " I return a living soul." Here is a fountain of life opened, and *let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* But I hasten to inquire,

VI. " How faith derives supplies from Christ for the support and nourishment of spiritual life ?"

I shall proceed to the solution of this by the following gradation.

1. The communication of grace from Christ to maintain and nourish spiritual life in his people, is a peculiar and distinguishing communication. It is appropriated to them and not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general. So animal spirits and nervous juices, are communicated from the head to that particular body to which it belongs, and to none other. So a vine conveys nutritive and prolific sap to its own branches, exclusive of all others. It may, indeed, be of service to other things, in other respects, as for shade, the entertainment of the sight, &c. but in this respect it supplies its own branches only. Thus Christ sheds his extensive influence on the whole creation ; for *by him all things consist :* but that particular kind and degree of influence whereby believers are quickened and kept alive, is peculiarly appropriated to them.

2. It is fit and necessary there should be a peculiar union betwixt Christ and his people, as the foundation of this peculiar influence.

Spiritual life, as to its infusion and preservation, proceeds from the Lord-Mediator, both morally and physically. Morally, from the merit of his obedience and sufferings, whereby it was purchased ; and physically, from his operation, whereby it is effected. And in both these views, it is congruous and necessary that it should suppose a special union with him.

As it results morally from his merit, it is fit there should be a special legal union, as the foundation of it. Christ and his people must be actually " one in law," before they can be actually entitled to or receive and enjoy the blessings purchased by his obedience to the law. So a wife must be made legally one with her husband, by a conjugal union, in order to entitle her to and give her the possession of his estate. An insolvent debtor must be legally one with his surety, that the surety's discharge of the debt may procure his acquittance.

And as the spiritual life proceeds physically from his agency, it is necessary there should be a previous special union, as the reason of the termination of that agency upon the believer rather than upon another. This must be a real, though spiritual union, as the communication of vital influences flowing from it, is real though spiritual. Wherever there is a special communication of influence, there is always a special union, as the source and foundation of it. So the peculiar influence of the soul upon the body, of the head upon the members, supposes that they are peculiarly united.

Accordingly the scriptures represent a peculiar union betwixt Christ and his people, which is not betwixt him and the rest of mankind, to whom he does not communicate spiritual life. *I am the vine*, says he to his disciples, *and ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing.* John xv. 5. To the same purport elsewhere, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* John xvii. 23. This is intimated when the relation betwixt Christ and his people is represented by a conjugal union. They *are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.* Rom. vii. 4. *They are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* Eph. v. 28, 32. But it is most plainly asserted in those passages where Jesus is represented as the head, the church collectively as his body, and particular believers as the members of his body. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ* mystical. *For by one Spirit we are all baptized*, or initiated, *into one body. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* 1 Cor. xii. 12—27. *God gave him to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.* Eph. i. 22, 23. See also Eph. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 19.

3. It is fit that *that* grace which has a peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in the uniting of the soul to Christ, and in continuing of that union, should also have a " peculiar concurrence or instrumentality in deriving supplies of spiritual strength from him ;" for since union is the true special ground of the communication, it is fit that that which is the peculiar instrument or bond of this union, should also be the peculiar instrument of receiving, or vehicle of communicating vital influences. Now,

4. Faith has a "peculiar concurrence" or "instrumentality in the first union" of the soul to Christ, and the consequent continuation of the union. It is the grand ligament whereby they are indissolubly conjoined. It is true, the spiritual man, as well as our animal bodies, consists of several essential parts. Repentance, love, and the whole system of evangelical graces and moral virtues are as necessary, in their proper respective places, as faith: But then faith has a peculiar aptitude, above all other graces and virtues, for performing the part we now appropriate to it. So heart, lungs, bowels, &c. are essential to the human body, as well as nerves and arteries; but the nerves are the peculiar vehicles to carry the vital spirits from the brain; and the arteries are the only conveyancers of the blood from the heart, through many labyrinths, to the whole body.

Faith, in a special manner, implies those things in its very nature, which reason directs us to look upon as suitable pre-requisites or concomitants of deriving vital influence from Christ. For instance, it is fit that all that receive spiritual life as a blessing of the covenant of grace, should submit to and acquiesce in the terms of that covenant. Now such a submission and acquiescence is faith. It is fit all that derive strength from Christ should be brought to place a humble, self-diffident dependance upon him for it, conscious of their own weakness. Now faith principally consists in such a dependance, and therefore is so often called *a trusting in the Lord.*

Moreover, the sacred oracles assert the peculiar instrumentality of faith in this matter. *Christ* is said to *dwell in our hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. and it is by *believing in his name that we receive power to become the sons of God.* John i. 12. He himself tells us, *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me.* John vi. 56, 57. And by eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, is undoubtedly meant faith in him: and consequently it is by faith believers are nourished.

For the particular improvement of this head, I shall make these three remarks:

1. That a saving faith is always operative; and what renders it so is its constant dependance on Christ for quickening grace. It is designed by God, and has a peculiar aptitude in its own nature to derive strength for all acts of holiness from Christ; and he will not deny any of the influences it naturally craves. He is a

living head, and will not suffer any of his members to languish under perpetual mortal decays, or drudge away their lives in successless toil, or supinely waste them in sloth and inactivity. He will fail none that trust in him : but their dependance on him will be like the leaning of the ivy on the oak, or the radication of a tree in a fruitful soil, an assured method to obtain support and nourishment. So far is a dependance on him from leading to sloth and libertinism, as some slanderously surmise.

2. We infer, that *without faith it is impossible to please God.* It has been shewn that without union to Christ, we cannot have an actual interest in his righteousness, or be the special objects of that quickening influence, whereby the spiritual life and activity of his people are maintained ; and without these, our persons or performances cannot be accepted, unless our own righteousness be sufficient, without an actual interest in his, to procure the pardon of sin, and reinstate us in the divine favour : and unless human nature, labouring under the maladies of its present degeneracy, be capable, without the special aids of divine grace, to yield suitable obedience to the law : neither of which can be asserted, without virtually renouncing the whole gospel. And we have seen, that faith has so important a place in the unition of the soul with Christ, and consequently, in entitling us to his righteousness, and deriving vital influences from him, that without it we cannot be at all united to him, or share in the happy consequences of this union, no more than there can be a circulation of the blood without veins and arteries.

3. We observe that gospel holiness may be distinguished from all counterfeits, and particularly from what some dignify with the name of morality, by this criterion, that it presupposes a special union with Christ, and is cherished in the heart, and exercised in practice, by virtue of the quickening influences flowing from him, as the head of his church, and received by faith ; whereas mere morality does not necessarily suppose such an union, but may result from our natural powers, under the common influences of divine providence.

I shall conclude with a short general improvement of the whole subject, in the following inferences :

1. That the reason why religion is so burdensome to many is, because they are " destitute of a principle of spiritual life," and the " quickening communications of divine grace." Constrained by self-love, they drudge and toil in religious duties, and cry,

"What a weariness is it!" Or impatient of so disagreeable a burden, they neglect them entirely. Religion is not natural to them, for want of a new nature. But to you that believe, *Christ is precious; all his ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.*

2. Let us examine ourselves, whether the evidences of spiritual life, which may be collected from what has been said, give us reason to conclude that we are possessed of it. Let us cast the discourse into a form of interrogation, and propose the following inquiries to our consciences:

Do we feel, or have we felt, a supernatural principle working within? Is our religion heaven-born? or is it natural and self-sprung? Is the habitual bent of our wills God-ward? Do our hearts propend towards him as their ultimate scope? Do we *delight in his law after the inner man, and will that which is good, even when we cannot do it?* Do we perceive ourselves at times *strengthened with might in the inner man?* And that we can *do all things through Christ strengthening us?* Have we ever experienced the important change of regeneration? are *old things passed away, and all things become new? Have we put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness?*

Is our religion more than a mere acquired habit, originally obtained by our own industry only, and the exercise of our natural powers, excited and assisted by education, custom, the means of grace? &c. Was it begun in the instantaneous infusion of a gracious principle, immediately by the Holy Spirit?

Do we derive our strength for obedience from Christ by faith? Is he *our life?* Are we generally crying, *Lord, we have no strength; but our eyes are unto thee?* Can we say with the apostle, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and what I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God?*

My dear brethren, let us search ourselves with these and the like inquiries: for many are destructively deceived in this matter. Living religion is wrapt in darkness from the eyes of most: they either place it in that in which it does not consist at all, or take the circumstances and appendages for the substance of it. *Great is the mystery of godliness*, not only objectively as revealed in the scriptures, but also subjectively, as wrought in the heart of a believer. It ought therefore to engage our most serious and intense thoughts.

3. Let those who are made spiritually alive, "acknowledge and admire the distinguishing grace of God, and act as it becomes their character"

You have seen that spiritual life is not promiscuously dispensed to mankind in general, but only to the regenerate, who are comparatively few. And can you restrain your wonder, that you should be the chosen objects of sovereign grace? or avoid breaking forth into extatic praises at so surprising a dispensation?

Moreover the design of your vivification, and the natural tendency of the principle of spiritual life is, that you may live to God; and therefore you are peculiarly obliged to make your whole life a series of obedience to Him. Indulge the propensions and tendencies of the new nature: obey and cherish all the impulses and motions of the divine principle within you. To offer violence to the new man, to cramp and fetter its powers, to resist its motions, and suffocate its heavenly aspirations, is the most horrid crime. It is to attempt to murder the child of grace in embryo; and sure, this is the worst of murder. *Reckon ye yourselves, then, to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* And *if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections upon* (savour and relish) *things above, not things on earth. And when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

4. I request and importune those that are dead in sin, to "use all proper means for the obtaining of quickening grace." The exhortation implies no contradiction or impossibility; for though they are spiritually dead, yet their natural principle of reason is still alive, and capable of exercising itself about spiritual objects; and God has enjoined them to make the best use they can of it, as the only way to obtain a better principle. God deals with us according to our nature and circumstances. We are corrupted creatures, and therefore He exerts his exceeding great and mighty power to work principles of holiness in us; but still we are rational creatures, and therefore he uses the powers of moral suasion with us, and justly requires us to exert our rational faculties in all the institutions of the gospel.

Be persuaded then, sinner, no longer to lie still in security; but *arise, call upon thy God: if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not. Lazarus! come forth. Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.* Linger not, lest eternal death overtake thee. Methinks I see him just at thy heels, for *thy damnation now of a long time slumbereth not.* Arise, come forth at the call of the gospel; otherwise, how wilt thou stand the shocking terror of that final alarm, *Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment?* But I must conclude with my hearty wish, *That the hour may come,* and O! that this may be the hour, *in which the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*—Which gracious prediction may the God of grace accomplish upon us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Sermon 51.

THE WAYS OF SIN HARD AND DIFFICULT.

ACTS IV. 6. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

YOU often hear of the narrow and rugged road of religion, which leadeth unto life; and some of you I am afraid, have not courage enough to venture upon it. You rather choose the smooth, broad, down-hill road to vice and pleasure, though it leads down to the chambers of death. It must be owned, that a religious life is a course of difficulties, a hard struggle, a constant conflict; and it is fit you should be honestly informed of it: but then it is fit you should also know, that the difficulties arise not from the nature of religion, but from the corruption and depravity of the nature of man in its present degenerate state. A course of religion is disagreeable, is hard, is difficult to mankind; just as a course of action is difficult to the sick, though it is easy, and affords pleasure to those that are well. There are difficulties in the way of sin, as well as in that of holiness, though the depravity of mankind renders them insensible of it. This is the view of the case I would now lay before you. There is a sense, in which it is true, that it is a hard thing to be a sinner, as well as to be a saint: there are huge difficulties in the way to hell, as well as in the way to heaven. And if you are insensible of them, it is owing, as I just ob-

served, to the corruption of your nature, and not to the real easiness of the thing in itself. It may be easy and pleasing to you to sin, just as it is easy to a dead body to rot, or pleasing to a leper to rub his sores. But to a reasonable creature, in a state of purity, with all his powers uncorrupted, it would indeed be an unpleasing, a hard, a difficult thing, to take that course which is so easy and so delightful to you; as it is hard and painful for a living man to suffer the mortification of his limbs, or for a healthy man to make himself sore. If it be hard, in one sense, to live a life of holiness, it is certainly hard, in another sense, to live a life of sin; namely, to run against conscience, against reason, against honour, against interest, against all the strong and endearing obligations you are under to God, to mankind, and to yourselves: or, in the words of my text, *it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.*

This is a proverb, in use among various nations, which has received a sanction from heaven in this text. It is used by Pindar, Euripides, and Æschylus, among the Greeks; and by Terence, among the Latins: and from the sense in which they use it, we are helped to understand it. *To kick against the pricks*, is an allusion to a lazy or unruly plough-horse, or ox, that when pricked with a goad, (an instrument used in ploughing, in sundry places, instead of a whip) refuses to go on, and spurns and kicks against the goad, and so wounds himself, and not the driver. In such circumstances, it is much harder to kick against the goads, and resist, than to go on; if he goes on, he need not fear the goad; but his resistance only hurts himself. It is to this that the phrase alludes; and it signifies a resistance injurious to the person that makes it, when it would be both easy and advantageous to obey.

Hence we may learn the precise sense in which it is used by the mouth of Christ, in this pungent address to Saul the persecutor, whom we now know under the higher name of Paul, the apostle.

Saul, animated with a furious, misguided, though honest zeal, against the disciples of Jesus, was now on his way to Damascus in pursuit of them; and had a commission from the highest court of the Jews to apprehend them: a commission which he was impatient to execute. This, in human view, was a very unpromising hour for his conversion; now it appears more likely that vengeance will arrest him as a criminal, than that grace will prevent him as a vessel of mercy. But O! what agreeable exploits of

grace has Jesus performed! At the first introduction of his religion, it was fit he should single out some great sinner, and make him a monument of his mercy, for the encouragement of future ages. Therefore he surprises this fierce persecutor in his daring career, darts the splendours of his glory around him, and pierces him to the heart with this irresistible expostulation, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Saul, in a trembling consternation, replies, *Who art thou, Lord?* He thought he was only bringing to justice a parcel of contemptible, blasphemous sectaries, unworthy of toleration; and little did he think that his persecuting zeal reached so high: little did he expect to hear one crying from the throne of heaven, *Why persecutest thou me?* But Jesus feels and resents the injuries done to his people, as done to himself. The head sympathises with its members; therefore he answers, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* And then follows my text, *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. q. d.* "Since it is Jesus, whom thou persecutest, the injury done to me, will only rebound upon thyself: I am infinitely advanced beyond the reach of thy rage; and even my people, who now seem in thy power, can suffer no real or lasting injury from it in the issue; for under my management, all things shall work for their good; but thy persecuting fury shall prove ruinous to thyself, as the wild ox that spurns and kicks against the goad hurts himself and not the driver." Thus, as I told you, this proverb signifies a resistance injurious to the person resisting, and harmless to him against whom it is made. And is not this hard? Is it not an arduous, preposterous exploit, to break through the strong restraints of the innate principle of self-preservation, and ruin one's self by a blow intended against another, beyond the reach of injury? This, one would think, is a piece of folly and cruelty, of which a being that has the least remains of reason or self-love, would be incapable.

This proverb may signify more: *q. d. I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;* Jesus, the Lord of glory: Jesus, the Saviour of sinners: Jesus, who has died for such sinners as thee; Jesus, who is all love and mercy, excellency and glory; Jesus, who has given thee such sufficient evidence of his divine mission, and the truth of his religion; and canst thou persecute Jesus? O! is this an easy thing to one that has the least reason or gratitude? Art thou able to break through such strong and endearing obligations? Is it not hard for thee to spurn against one so great, so

glorious, so gracious and condescending? Must not this be a horrid exploit of wickedness beyond thy power?

That I may the more fully illustrate the striking thought suggested by my text, I shall point out to you some seemingly insuperable obstacles in the way to hell, or some dire exploits, which, one would think, would be too hard for you to perform, which yet you must perform, if you persist in a course of sin.

1. Is it not a hard thing to be an unbeliever, or a deist, in our age and country, while the light of the gospel shines around us with full blaze of evidence?

Before a man can work up himself to the disbelief of a religion attended with such undeniable evidence, and inspiring such divine dispositions and exalted hopes, what absurdities must he embrace! what strong convictions must he resist! what dark suspicions, what boding fears and misgivings, what shocking peradventures and tremendous doubts must he struggle with! what glorious hopes must he resign! what gloomy and shocking prospects must he reconcile himself to! what violence must be offered to conscience! what care must be used to shut up all the avenues of serious thought, and harden the heart against the terrors of death and the supreme tribunal! How painful a piece of preposterous self-denial to reject the balm the gospel provides to heal a broken heart and a bleeding conscience, and the various helps and advantages it furnishes us with to obtain divine favour and everlasting happiness! How hard to work up the mind to believe that Jesus, who spoke, and acted, and suffered, and did every thing, like an incarnate God, was an impostor, or at best a moral philosopher! or that the religion of the Bible, that contains the most sublime and God-like truths, and the most pure and perfect precepts of piety and morality, is the contrivance of artful and wicked men, or evil spirits! These, brethren, are no easy things. There are many sceptics and smatterers in infidelity, but few, very few, are able to make thorough work of it, or commence staunch unbelievers. The attempt itself is a desperate shift. A man must have reduced himself to a very sad case indeed, before he can have any temptation to set about it. He has, by his wilful wickedness, set christianity against him, before he can have any temptation to set himself against christianity: and when he proclaims war against it, he finds it hard, yea, impossible, to make good his cause. He may indeed put on the airs of defiance and triumph, and affect to laugh at his enemy, and at

times may be half persuaded he has really got the victory. But such men find the arms of their own reason often against them, and their own conscience forms violent insurrections in favour of religion, which they cannot entirely suppress; so that they are like their father, whatever they pretend, they believe and tremble too. Alas! that there should be so many unhappy companions in this infernal cause, in our country and nation. They find it hard, even now, to kick against the goads: and O! how much harder will they find it in the issue! Their resistance will prove ruinous to themselves; but neither they nor the gates of hell shall prevail against the cause they oppose. Christianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its sentence. It is a long-tried bulwark, that has withstood all the assaults of earth and hell for near 6000 years, and has still proved impregnable. Infidels may hurt themselves by opposing it; as an unruly stupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himself, but not the goads, by kicking against them.

2. Is it not hard for men to profess themselves believers, and assent to the truths of christianity, and yet live as if they were infidels!

A professed speculative atheist, or infidel, is a monster that we do not often meet with: but the more absurd and unaccountable phenomenon of a practical atheist; one who is orthodox in principle, but an infidel in practice, we may find wherever we turn: and it would be strange if none such have mingled in this assembly to day. To such I would particularly address myself.

If you believe christianity, or even the religion of nature, you believe that there is a God of infinite excellency; the Maker, Preserver, Benefactor, and Ruler of the world, and of you in particular; and consequently, that you are under the strongest, and most endearing obligations to love him, and make it your great study and endeavour to obey his will in all instances. Now is it not strange, that while you believe this, you are able to live as you do? How can you live so thoughtless of this great and glorious God, who bears such august and endearing relations to you? How can you withhold your love from him, and ungratefully refuse obedience? Is not this a hard thing to you? Does it not cost you some labour to reconcile your consciences to it? If this be easy to you, what champions in wickedness are you! how mighty to do evil! This would not be easy to the mightiest archangel: no, it is a dire atchievement he would tremble to

think of. And if it be easy to you, it is, as I observed before, in the same sense, that it is easy to a dead body to rot. Your strength to do evil is your real weakness, or, which is the same, the strength of your disease.

Again, if you believe the christian religion, you believe the glorious doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ; you believe that he, the Father's great co-equal Son, assumed our nature, passed through the various hardships of life, and died upon a cross for you; and all this out of pure unmerited love. And is it no difficulty to neglect him, to dishonour him, to slight his love, and disobey his commands? Does this monstrous wickedness never put you to a stand? Degenerate and corrupt as you are, have you not such remains of generous principles within you, as that you cannot, without great violence to your own hearts, reject such a Saviour? Does not at least a spark of gratitude sometimes kindle in your hearts, which you find it hard to quench entirely? Does not conscience often take up arms in the cause of its Lord, and do you not find it hard to quell the insurrection? Alas! if you find little or no difficulty in treating the blessed Jesus with neglect, it shews that you are mighty giants in iniquity, and sin with the strength of a devil.

Again; If you believe the christian religion, you must believe that regeneration, or a thorough change of heart and life, and universal holiness, are essentially necessary to constitute you a real christian, and prepare you for everlasting happiness. And while you have this conviction, is it not a hard thing for you to be only christians in name, or self-condemned hypocrites, or to rest contented in any attainments short of real religion? Is it an easy thing to you to keep your eyes always shut against the light, which would shew you to yourselves in your true colours? to keep such a close guard, as never to let the mortifying secret pass, that you are indeed but a hypocrite, and to harden yourselves against the portion of hypocrites, which will ere long be distributed to you?

Finally, If you believe christianity, or even natural religion, you believe a future state of rewards and punishments; rewards and punishments the highest that human nature is capable of. And is it not a hard thing to make light of immortal happiness, or everlasting misery? Since you love yourselves, and have a strong innate desire of pleasure and horror of pain, how can you reconcile yourselves to the thoughts of giving up your portion in heaven, and being ingulfed forever in the infernal pit? Or how

can you support your hope of enjoying the one, and escaping the other, while you have no sufficient evidence? Can you venture so important an interest upon an uncertainty, or dare to take your chance, without caring what might be the issue? Are you capable of such dreadful fool-hardiness? Do you not often shrink back aghast from the prospect? Does not the happiness of heaven sometimes so strongly attract you, that you find it hard to resist? And do not the terrors of hell start up before you in the way of sin, and are you not brought to a stand, and ready to turn back? The pit of hell, like a raging volcano, thunders at a distance, that you may not fall thereinto by surprise. You may perceive its flames, and smoke, and roarings in the threatenings of God's law, while you are yet at a distance from it. And is it easy for you to push on your way, when thus warned? O! one would think, it would be much more easy and delightful to a creature endowed with reason and self-love, to abandon this dangerous road, and choose the safe and pleasant way of life.

I might multiply instances under this head: but these must suffice at present. And I proceed to ask,

3. Is it not hard for a man to live in a constant conflict with himself? I mean with his conscience.

This obstacle in the way to hell has appeared in all the former particulars: but it is so great, and seemingly insuperable, that it deserves to be pointed out by itself. When the sinner would continue his career to hell, conscience, like the cherubim at the gates of paradise, or the angel in Balaam's road, meets him with its flaming sword, and turns every way, to guard the dreadful entrance into the chambers of death.

When a man goes on in the thoughtless neglect of God, and the concerns of eternity, or indulges himself in vice and irreligion, conscience whispers, "What will be the end of this course? thou shalt yet suffer for this. Is it fit thou shouldest thus treat the blessed God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ? Is it wise to neglect the great work of salvation, and run the risque of eternal ruin?" I may appeal to sinners themselves, whether they do not often hear such remonstrances as these from within? Indeed, in the hurry and bustle of business and company, and the headlong career of pleasure and amusement, the voice of conscience is not heard. But you cannot always avoid retirement; sometimes you must be by yourselves, and then you find it hard to close up and guard all the avenues of serious thought. Then conscience in-

sists upon a fair hearing, and enters many a solemn protestation against your conduct, warns you of the consequence, and urges you to take another course. Whatever airs of impious bravery you put on in public, and however boldly you bid defiance to these things, yet, in such pensive hours, do you not find that you are cowards at heart? Is not conscience like to get the victory? Are you not obliged to break out into the world, and rally all its forces to your assistance, that you may suppress your conscience? Now, how hard a life is this! The life of the sinner is a warfare, as well as that of the christian. Conscience is his enemy, always disturbing him; that is, he himself is an enemy to himself while he continues an enemy to God. Some, indeed, by repeated violences, stun their conscience, and it seems to lie still, like a conquered enemy. But this is a conquest fatal to the conquerors. O! would it not be much easier to let conscience have fair play, to pursue your own happiness, as it urges you, and leave the smooth, down-hill road to ruin, from which it would restrain you? Conscience urges you to your duty and interest with many sharp goads, and will you still kick against them? O! do you not find this hard? I am sure it would be very hard, it would be impossible to a creature under the right conduct of reason and self-love. And before you can be capable of performing this dire exploit with ease, you must have acquired a prodigious, gigantic strength in sinning. This is what the mightiest saint upon earth could not dare to do. No; he owns conscience is his master: long did he resist, but now he must submit: and he would not incur the displeasure of his conscience for all the world. O! that we were all weak in this respect! My time will allow me only to add,

4. Is it not a hard piece of self-denial for you to deprive yourselves of the exalted pleasures of religion?

You love yourselves, and you love happiness, and therefore one would reasonably expect you would choose that which will afford you the most solid, refined and lasting happiness, and abandon whatever is inconsistent with it. Now religion is a source of happiness. Yes; that dull, melancholy thing, religion, which you think perhaps, would put an end to all your pleasures, and which, for that reason, you have kept at a distance from; religion, which its enemies will tell you has made some intolerably precise, and dead to all the joys of life, and turned others mad and melancholy; religion, I say, will afford you a happiness more pure, more noble, and more durable than all the world can give.

Religion not only proposes future happiness beyond the comprehension of thought, but will afford you present happiness beyond whatever you have known while strangers to it. The pleasures of a peaceful, approving conscience, of communion with God, the supreme good, of the most noble dispositions and most delightful contemplations; these are the pleasures of religion. And ask those who have enjoyed them, those whom experience has qualified to be judges, and they will tell you with one voice, "There are no pleasures comparable to these." Besides, religion has infinitely the advantage of other things as to futurity. Those pleasures which are inconsistent with it end in shocking prospects, as well as pale reviews. But religion opens the brightest prospects; prospects of everlasting salvation and happiness; prospects that brighten the gloomy shades of death, and the awful world beyond, and run out infinitely beyond our ken through a vast eternal duration. My heart is so full of my subject, that I must borrow the more expressive words of another, to give it vent.*

"Let the proud Witling argue all he can,
It is religion still that makes the man;
'Tis this, my friends, that streaks our morning bright;
'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart:
Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;
Within the breast bids purest pleasures rise;
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.
When the storm thickens, and the thunder rolls;
When the earth trembles to th' affrighted poles;
The pious mind nor doubts nor fears assail,
For storms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.
And when disease obstructs the labouring breath,
When the heart sickens, and each pulse is death,
Even then Religion shall sustain the just,
Grace their last moments, nor desert their dust."

Such, my brethren, is religion; the highest, the most substantial, and most lasting happiness of man. And is it not a painful piece of self-denial to you, to give up all this happiness, when nothing is required to purchase it but only your choice of it! Is not this doing violence to the innate principle of self-love and desire of happiness? Can you be so stupid, as to imagine that the world, or sin, or any thing that can come in competition with religion, can be of equal or comparable advantage to you? Sure your own

* See a Letter to Mr. Hervey by a physician, prefixed to his Meditations, Vol. 1.

reason must give in its verdict in favour of religion. And is it not a hard thing for you to act against your own reason, against your own interest, your highest, your immortal interest, and against your own innate desire of happiness? Do you never find it any difficulty to live for years in the world, without once tasting the sweets of the love of God, or the pleasures of an applauding conscience! Is it not hard, that while others around you, in the use of the very means which you enjoy, are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and are animated to endure the calamities of life, and encounter the terrors of death, by the prospect of everlasting glory, while they are now often lost in extatic wonder, while surveying the things that God hath laid up for them that love him: I say, is it not hard, that you should be destitute of all these transporting prospects, and have nothing but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, or at best a vain self-flattering hope, which will issue in the more confounding disappointment? Is not this really hard? Must it not be a difficulty to you to live at this rate?

And now, sinners, will you with infernal bravery break through all these obstacles, and force a passage into the flames below? Or will you not give over the preposterous struggle to ruin yourselves, and suffer yourselves to be saved? O! let me arrest you in your dangerous career, as the voice which pronounced my text did St. Paul; and let me prevail upon you for the future to choose the highway to life, and take that course to which God, conscience, duty, and interest urge you. In that indeed you will meet with difficulties; it is a narrow and rugged road; and it will require hard striving to make a progress in it. But then the difficulties you have here to surmount are in the road to happiness, with which therefore it is worth your while to struggle; but those in the other are in the road to destruction; and your striving to surmount them, is but striving to destroy yourselves forever. It may be worth your while to labour and conflict hard to be saved; but is it worth while to take so much pains, and strive so hard to be damned? Besides, the difficulties in the heavenly road result from the weak, disordered, and wicked state of human nature, as the difficulty of animal action and enjoyment proceeds from sickness of body: and consequently, every endeavour to surmount these difficulties tends to heal, to rectify, to strengthen, and ennoble our nature, and advance it to perfection. But the difficulties in the way to hell proceed from the

contrariety of that course to the best principles of human nature, and to the most strong and rational obligations; and consequently, the more we struggle with these difficulties, the more we labour to suppress and root out the remains of all good principles, and break the most inviolable obligations to God and ourselves. The easier it is for us to sin, the more base and corrupt we are: just as the more rotten a limb is, the easier for it to drop off; the more disordered and stupified the body is, the more easy to die. To meet with no obstacle in the way to hell, but to run on without restraint, is terrible indeed; it shews a man abandoned of God, and ripe for destruction. Such an ease in sinning is the quality of a devil.

Upon the whole, you see, that though there be difficulties on both sides, yet the way to heaven has infinitely the advantage; and therefore, let me again urge you to choose it. You have walked long enough at variance with God, with your own conscience, with your own interest, and duty: come now be reconciled: make these your antagonists no longer. While you persist in this opposition, you do but kick against the pricks; that is, you make a resistance injurious to yourselves. For the future, declare war against sin, Satan, and all their confederates, and ere long ye shall be made more than conquerors; and for your encouragement remember, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son, saith the Lord God Almighty.*

Sermon 52.

THE CHARACTERS OF THE WHOLE AND SICK, IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE, CONSIDERED AND CONTRASTED.

MATT. IX. 12.—*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

THERE is no article of faith more certain than that Jesus Christ is an all-sufficient and most willing Saviour, *able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and that those that come unto him, he will in no wise cast out.* They that intrust their souls in his hands he keeps, and none of them is lost. It is also certain that all the guilty sons of Adam stand in the most absolute need of him: in vain do they look for salvation in

any other. Without him, they are undone forever: and without him, their very existence becomes a curse, and their immortality but the duration of their misery. The disease of sin has so deeply infected their souls, that none but this divine Physician can heal them.

Since this is the case, who would not expect that Jesus would be universally the darling of mankind? Who would not expect that as many as are wounded, and just perishing of their wounds, would all earnestly apply to this Physician, and seek relief from him upon any terms? Who would suspect there should be so much as one heart cold and disaffected towards him? Must not all love and desire him, since all need him so extremely, and since he is so completely qualified to be their deliverer?

But, alas! notwithstanding such favourable presumptions from the nature of the thing, it is a most notorious fact that this divine Physician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-sufficient and willing Saviour is generally neglected by perishing sinners. There are thousands among us that have no affectionate thoughts of him, no eager longings after him, they exert no vigorous endeavours to obtain an interest in him, nor are they tenderly solicitous about it. They indeed profess his religion, and call themselves christians after his name: they pay him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they shall be saved through him; but as to their hearts and affections, he has no share there: these are reserved for the world, which, in practical estimation, they prefer to him, whatever they profess.

Now whence is this strange and shocking phenomenon in the rational world? Whence is it that the dying are careless about a Physician? That a Deliverer is neglected by those that are perishing? The true reason we may find in my text, *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;* that is, "they who imagine themselves well, however disordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a physician, and therefore will not apply to him; but they who feel themselves sick, will eagerly apply to him, and put themselves under his care."

This is the answer of Christ to the proud cavilling Pharisees, who censured his free conversation with publicans and sinners, at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for him. The publicans were a sort of custom-house officers among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whose tributaries they then were, to

collect the levies or duties imposed by the government. They were generally persons of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raising the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews, especially by the strict sect of the Pharisees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it; for it was a public badge of the slavery of the Jews to the Romans; which, to a people so proud and so fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they could not patiently bear. The publicans therefore were objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned sort of men; and the Jews, particularly the rigid and haughty Pharisees, held no conversation with them, but kept them at a distance, as though they had been excommunicated. Hence, says Christ, concerning one excommunicated by the church for incorrigible wickedness, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man, and a publican*, Matt. xviii. 17. that is, have no intercourse with him, but treat him as the Jews do the publicans.

The condescending Jesus, who *came to seek and save that which was lost*, did not conduct himself towards those poor outcasts, upon the rigid principles of the Pharisees. They held them in such contempt, that they did not labour to instruct and reform them.—But Jesus preached to them, conversed with them freely, used the most condescending, affable, and ingratiating measures to reform them, and called some of them to the honour of being his disciples: of this number was Matthew, the author of this history; once an abandoned publican, afterwards a disciple, an apostle, and one of the four evangelists, whose immortal writings have diffused the vital savour of the name of Jesus through all ages and countries. O! the condescension, the freeness, the efficacy of the grace of Christ! it can make a publican an apostle! an abhorred outcast the favourite of Heaven, and the companion of angels! What abundant encouragement does this give to the most abandoned sinner among you to turn unto the Lord! Let publicans and sinners despair of mercy and salvation if they continue in their present condition; but if they arise and follow Jesus at his call, and become his humble, teachable disciples, they need not despair; nay, they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be assured they shall be admitted into the kingdom of God, when the self-righteous children of the kingdom are shut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feast for his new Master, that he might shew his respect and gratitude to

him, and that he might let his brother publicans and old companions have an opportunity of conversing with him, and receive his instructions. How natural is it for a sinner, just brought to love Jesus, to use means to allure others to him, especially his former companions! Having seen his own guilt and danger, he is deeply affected with theirs, and would willingly lead them to that Saviour who has given him so gracious a reception. Indeed his generous endeavours of this kind, though the most substantial and disinterested evidences of friendship, often excite the contempt and ridicule of his former companions; and the more so, as they are generally attended with the imprudent, but well-meant blunders of inexperience, and an honest zeal mingled with wild fire. But at times such a convert is made the instrument of bringing those to be his companions in the way to heaven, who had walked with him in the ways of sin: and this is sufficient encouragement to such of you as have been called, like Matthew, to use your best endeavours with your fellow-sinners. Who knows but you may *save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins?* And what a noble, beneficent exploit is this?

The blessed Jesus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expose him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew's invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a physician, he employs himself in an hospital, among the sick and dying, and not among the healthy and gay. The conversation of sinners could not be agreeable to him for itself; but as it gave him opportunity of doing them good, it afforded him a generous pleasure. To converse with his Father and the holy angels in his native heaven, would have been more pleasing in itself to his holy soul; but if by conversing with sinners in our guilty world, he can but save the perishing creatures, he cheerfully submits to self-denial, and even rejoices in it; just as a compassionate physician, though he has no pleasure in the melancholy mansions of sickness, yet frequents them, that he may relieve the distressed.

The Pharisees now thought they had a good handle to raise popular clamour against Christ, and therefore cavil at these freedoms, as though they had been profane, and inconsistent with the character of the Messiah, or even of a prophet. If he claimed this character, they thought it much more becoming him to keep company with them, than with profligate publicans. Hence to stumble and perplex his disciples, they come to them, and

ask, *Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* The disciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wisdom which all their enemies could not withstand; and therefore Jesus answers them, and takes upon himself his own defence. *The whole*, says he, *have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.* Some suppose, that by the whole, Christ means those that were really whole, or that were not so infected with the disease of sin, as to stand in need of him as a physician. When such persons can be found among the sons of men, this exposition will appear more plausible. But since we know that all have sinned, and stand in need of Christ as a Saviour, it is much more reasonable, I think, to suppose, that by the whole, Christ means those that imagined themselves whole, though really languishing with the deadly disease of sin. It seems to me that he here answers the Pharisees upon their own principles, and proves his conduct to be justifiable, even supposing their high opinion of themselves, and their contemptuous idea of the publicans to be true; as if he had said, "I come into the world under the character of a physician for sick souls. Such, you will grant, these despised publicans are; and therefore, you must also grant, that these are the persons I have to deal with, and these are most likely to make application to me. But as for yourselves, you think you are righteous; you think you are not so far gone with the disease of sin as to need a physician sent down from heaven to heal you. Now I will not determine at present, whether this high opinion you have of yourselves be just or not. Be it right or wrong, it is certain, that while you entertain it, you cannot consistently find fault with my conduct. If you are such, I have no business with you as a physician. I must, therefore, rather choose to converse with these sinners, who now begin to see themselves such, and to be sensible of their need of a physician."

Thus, as I observed, Jesus here forms an argument *ad hominem*, or vindicates his conduct even upon the principles of the Pharisees themselves. It was not now to his purpose to dispute the high opinion they had of themselves; even that opinion furnished him with a sufficient defence. But, when it was proper, he faithfully exposes their true character, as proud, self-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the most terrible woes against them.

I might perhaps render the matter plainer by a familiar illustration. Suppose a man of learning in company with two persons; the one really ignorant, but highly conceited of his knowl-

edge, and consequently unteachable; the other ignorant too, but sensible of it, and, therefore, desirous of instruction: suppose he should turn from the self-conceited creature, and carry on conversation with the other, who was likely to profit by it; and suppose the former should resent it, and say, "If he were indeed a scholar, as he pretends to be, he would not be fond of the society of such an ignorant dunce, but would rather choose me for a companion." How properly might a teacher reply, "O! you are a wise man; and have no need of my instruction; and, therefore, as a teacher, I have no business with you; but this poor, ignorant creature is sensible of his want of instruction; and, therefore, it is most fit I should converse with him." Such a reply has a peculiar pungency and mortifying force in it; and such Jesus used in the case before us.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purposes, I intend to describe the characters of those that are whole, and of those that are sick, in the senses here intended.

There are none of the sons of men who are really whole. Their souls are all diseased; for all have sinned, *and there is none righteous, no, not one.* And perhaps there are none upon earth so proud, and so ignorant of themselves, as to affirm in so many words, that they are whole; that is, "perfectly righteous."—Therefore, by the whole, cannot be meant either those who are really free from all sin, or those who imagine themselves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Pharisees were capable of flattering themselves so far. But by the whole, are meant those who are indeed guilty, depraved sinners, and who are ready to make a superficial confession in words that they are sinners, but continue secure and impenitent, insensible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Saviour; that is, those who are really sick, and dangerously ill, and yet are as easy, as unapprehensive of danger, as careless about applying to the physician, as if nothing ailed them. The disease is of a lethargic nature, and stupifies the unhappy creatures, so that they are not sensible of it. It renders them delirious, so that they think themselves well, when the symptoms of death are strong upon them. What multitudes of such may we see in the world! The word of God pronounces them dangerously ill; their friends may see the most deadly symptoms upon them: but alas! they are stupidly insensible of their own case. Jesus, the divine Physician, warns them of their danger, offers

them his help, and prescribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they disregard his warnings, neglect his gracious offer, and refuse to submit to his prescriptions. This is the general character of those that are whole, in the sense of my text.

By the sick, are meant those who like the former, are really guilty, corrupt sinners, in extreme need of a Saviour, and who readily confess they are such; but here lies the difference, they are not only such in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are such, but they are deeply sensible of it, they are tenderly affected with their case: their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themselves and of Jesus Christ, their designs and endeavours are such as are natural to a soul sensibly sick of sin, and such as bear a resemblance to those of a person sick in body, and using all means for a recovery. It is the characteristic of this class of sinners, not that they are less holy, or in more danger, than others; but that they are more sensible of their condition, and more solicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themselves disordered; they put themselves under the care of Jesus, the only Physician of souls; they submit to his prescriptions, and use all means for their recovery to soundness of mind, from the deadly disease of sin. This is the general character of the sick, in the sense of my text; but it is necessary I should descend to particulars.

The particular characters of the whole and the sick, in contrast, are such as these:

1. He that is whole has never had a clear affecting sight and sense of sin; but he that is sick is fully convicted, and deeply sensible of it. The one has only a general, superficial, unaffecting conviction, that he is a sinner: that he has not been so good as he should have been; that his heart is somewhat disordered: and especially that he has been guilty of sundry bad actions. But, alas; he neither sees his sinfulness in its full extent, nor is suitably affected with that little of it he sees. He does not clearly see the entire and universal corruption of his heart, and the numberless principles and seeds of sin that are there; the blindness of his mind as to divine things; the secret disaffection of his heart towards God and holiness; the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmness and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a transient glance, a superficial view of these things; but he has not a deep settled conviction of them; nor is he suitably affected

with what he knows of his own sinfulness. It does not appear to him such a mighty matter to have such a disordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions ; few, I say, for so they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. Sin appears to him a trifling peccadillo, a small evil, and he has a thousand excuses to make for it. Hence he is as easy, as careless, as presumptuous in his hopes, as if he believed he did not really deserve punishment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leprosy of sin spreads ever so wide, and breaks out into ever so many putrid and mortifying sores, yet he is easy and secure, and insensible of the disease. Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himself sick, nor uses the least means for his recovery.

O ! what multitudes of such are among us ! They will confess themselves sinners, with as little concern as if they were quite free from sin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it so with the poor sick sinner ? O ! no : he sees, he feels that his *whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint, and that from the crown of the head, even unto the sole of the foot, there are nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores.* He feels the plague of a hard senseless heart, and the secret springs of wickedness within him. He feels that sin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in religious endeavours, than a [illegible]man is to employ himself in active life. O ! into what consternation is the sinner struck, when he is awakened out of his lethargic security, and his eyes are opened to see himself in a just light ! He had flattered himself that he had a good constitution of soul, and that little or nothing ailed him ; but now, he is surprise ! to see the strong symptoms of spiritual death upon him.

Suppose some of you, who have come here to-day vigorous and healthy, should suddenly discover the spots of a plague broken out all over you, how would it strike you with surprise and horror ! Such is the surprise and horror of the awakened sinner ; thus is he alarmed and amazed. So clear are his views of his entire and universal depravity, and imminent danger, that he is utterly astonished he was so stupid as never to discover it before. Now also he has a deep sense of the evil of sin : he not only sees himself universally disordered, but he sees, he feels the disorder to be deadly : sin now appears to him the greatest evil upon earth,

or even in hell. O ! how worthy of the severest vengeance from a righteous God ! how contrary to the divine purity ! how base, how ungrateful a violation of the most strong and endearing obligations ! how destructive to the soul, not only according to the penalty of the divine law, but in its own native tendency ! During the progress of the christian life, he feels himself recovering a little, though very slowly, while he follows the prescriptions of his divine physician, and receives healing influences from him. He feels his enfeebled soul gathering a little strength ; his vitiated taste gradually corrected ; and the welcome symptoms of returning health ; but O ! he is sensibly sick still. The cure is not complete in this world ; but the remains of his old disorder hang upon him all his life, and he is subject to many dangerous relapses, in which it gathers new strength, and he is afraid it is incurable.

2. They that are whole are generally easy and secure, and unapprehensive of danger ; but the sick soul is alarmed and anxious : and cannot be easy, till it perceives some appearances of recovery.

He that is whole, is benumbed with a stupid insensibility ; but he that is sick is in pain from the disease of sin, which he sensibly feels. The one can walk about merry and thoughtless, with a hard depraved heart within him ; the other is perpetually uneasy, and, like a sick man, has no taste for any thing while he feels such a heart within him. If the one is anxious, it is with some worldly care ; if the other is anxious, it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying soul. The one can give himself up to business, or pleasure, or idleness, as a man in health, and at ease ; the other is apprehensive that his soul is in great danger ; and, like a sick man, gives up his eager pursuits, till he sees whether he is likely to recover. He is alarmed with the deadly consequences of sin, as it exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of heaven, and all the miseries of the infernal world. But this is not all that distresses him ; he considers sin, in itself, as a loathsome disease, and is pained with its present effects upon him. As a sick man is not only alarmed at the consequence of his disease, namely, death, but considers it as a present pain, and as depriving him of the present comforts of life ; so the sick soul feels sin as a loathsome, painful disease, that now deprives it of the exalted pleasures of religion, and renders it incapable of serving its God with vigour and life. This indisposition of soul for the

exercises of religion, is, in itself, a constant uneasiness to him who is spiritually sick. How strongly does St. Paul represent the case, when he cries out, *O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. The image seems to be that of a living man walking about with a rotten, nauseous carcass tied fast to him, which oppresses him, and he cannot, with all his efforts cast it off; but it lies heavy upon him wherever he goes: which constrains him to cry out, "O! who shall deliver me from this dead body?" This is the character of the soul sick of sin. But he that is whole hath little or no uneasiness upon this account. If he is alarmed at all, it is with the consequence of sin; his slavish soul fears nothing but the punishment. As for the disease itself, it is so far from giving him uneasiness, that he is in love with it. It affords him sensations of pleasure, rather than of pain, and he rather dreads a recovery, than the continuance of the disorder. Sin has intoxicated him to such a degree, that holiness, which is the health of the soul, is disagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languishing than recover.

My brethren, you can easily distinguish between sickness and health of body; and you are very ready to do it. And will you not inquire what state your souls are in? whether they are sensible of their sickness, and in a way of recovery? or whether they are stupified, or made delirious by the disorder, insensible of their danger, and unsolicitous about their recovery? I pray you examine yourselves in these particulars.

3. They that are whole are unwilling to apply to a physician, or to follow his prescriptions; but to the sick a physician is most welcome, and they will submit to his directions, however self-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we must take particular notice of it.

They that are in health have no regard to a physician, as such: they neither send for him, nor will they accept of his help, if offered gratis: they look upon the best of medicines with neglect, as of no use or importance to them: the prescriptions proper to the sick they hear with indifference, as not being concerned. Thus it is with thousands, who imagine themselves whole in spirit. The Lord Jesus exhibits himself to the sons of men under the character of a physician; the gospel makes a free offer of his assistance to all sick souls that will freely accept it. And what

reception does he generally meet with ? Why, multitudes neglect him, as though they had no need of him. They may indeed pay him the compliment of professing his religion, because it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country, but they have no eager desires after him ; they are not in earnest, and laborious to obtain his assistance ; they do not invite him with the most affectionate entreaties to undertake their case ; they do not beg and cry for relief from him, like blind Bartimeus, Mark x. 47. *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.* In short, whatever regard they may profess for him, they are not deeply sensible of their absolute need of him : they are not feelingly affected towards him, as towards a being with whom they have the nearest personal concern, a concern of the utmost importance : and the reason is, they are whole in their own apprehensions ; or if they feel some qualms of conscience, some fits of painful remorse, they soon heal their own hurt slightly, *crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavours, and with this they hope to heal themselves. Thus Jesus is neglected ; they give him the name of a Saviour ; but in reality they look to themselves for a cure. How is the gospel that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly physician, generally received in the world ? Alas ! it is neglected, as the offer of superfluous help. It is heard with that indifference with which men in health attend to the prescriptions of a physician to the sick, in which they have no immediate concern. Brethren, is this neglected gospel the only effectual mean for healing your dying souls ? Then what means the stupidity and inattention with which it is heard ? What means the general neglect with which it is treated ? O ! how affecting is it to see a dying world rejecting the only restorative that can heal their disease, and preserve their lives ! But alas ! thus it is all around us.

Again, Jesus prescribes to the sons of men the only means of their recovery. Particularly he enjoins them no more to drink poison ; that is, no more to indulge themselves in sin, which is, in its own nature, the most deadly poison to the soul And what can be more reasonable than this ? Yet this is what a stupid world principally objects against, and multitudes rather die than submit to it. A disordered, empoisoned constitution of soul is to them the most agreeable. This divine Physician likewise requires them to use the means of grace instituted in the gospel :

to meditate upon their condition, and obtain a deep sense of their disorder ; to read and hear the word with solemn attention, and self-application ; to pray with frequency and importunity. These are his prescriptions to all that would recover under his hands. But how few observe them in earnest ! What a general neglect of the means of grace prevails in our country, or what a careless attendance upon them ! which is equally pernicious ? Christ also enjoins them to submit to him as their Physician, to flatter themselves no longer that they can heal themselves by means within their own power, but to apply his blood as the only healing balm to their wounded souls. But, alas ! they disregard this grand prescription ; they will not submit to him ; but, like an obstinate patient, will have their own way, though eternal death should be the consequence.

But this is not the case of the sinner spiritually sick : he will do any thing, he will submit to any thing, if it may but save him from the mortal disease of sin. How ardently does he long after Jesus ! With what cheerfulness does he put himself under his care ! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free salvation in the gospel ! and how dear is the gospel to his heart on this account ! With what eager wishful eyes does he look upon his Physician ! How does he delight to feel himself under the operation of his hand ! to feel him probe his wounds, and then apply the balm of his blood ! With what anxiety does he observe the symptoms, and inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not ! and O ! with what pleasure does he discover the signs of returning health ! to feel a little eager appetite for spiritual food ! to feel a little spiritual life in religious exercises ! to feel himself able to run in the way of God's commandments ! to feel the principles of sin weakened within him ! How sweet is this ! How willingly does he submit to the prescriptions of his physician, and attend upon the means of grace, however disagreeable to a carnal mind ! He makes the law of God the rule of his regimen, and would not indulge himself in any thing which that sacred dispensatory forbids. He guards against relapses, and keeps out of the way of temptation, as far as possible, lest his frail constitution should be hurt. The society of sinners is like the company of persons infected with a contagious disease, which he is in danger of catching, and therefore he avoids it as cautiously as he can. Let those that think their souls healthy and vigorous, boast of their strength, and what mighty things they can do in religion ;

as for him, he feels his weakness ; he feels he can do nothing aright, but just as he receives daily strength from Christ. He feels himself every day troubled with some disorder or other, yea, with a complication of them : therefore he is daily sensible of his need of the physician, and makes daily application to him. He does not begrudge to take time from his other affairs, and, as it were, to keep his chamber a while, that he may use means for the recovery of his soul : for, O ! if he lose his soul, what would the whole world profit him ? In short, the sick sinner is a tender, delicate, frail creature, entirely subject to the prescriptions of Christ, and every day taking means from him ; anxious for his recovery, and willing to submit to any thing that may promote it. This is the man in our Christ-despising world, that gives Jesus a most willing and welcome reception, and embraces his gospel, as containing all his salvation and all his desire. O ! that there were many such in our world ! for this man is in a hopeful way of recovery. This world is a vast hospital, full of dying souls : Jesus descends from heaven, and enters among them, offering them health and eternal life, if they will but submit to his directions, which are as easy as possible. Repentance, indeed, and some other bitter ingredients, are included in a religion for sinners ; and how can it be otherwise, since these are necessary for their recovery, in the very nature of things ? Besides, even these are sweet, when taken in the vehicle of a Saviour's dying love ; and many a soul has found more noble pleasure in generous sorrow for sin, than ever they found in the commission of it.

But after all, the generality die in their sins, amidst the full means of their recovery ; and the great reason is, they will not be convinced of their danger, nor be persuaded to apply to the Physician. O ! how tragical and affecting a case this ! and what may render it the more so to us is, that it is the case of some of us. Yes, my brethren, though I am unwilling to harbour one hard thought of any of you, yet I cannot avoid concluding that there are some, I am afraid many souls, in this assembly, who are not sensible of their dangerous disease, and their need of Christ as a Physician, and therefore are in danger of perishing without him. Sin, like a strong dose of opium, has stupified you, and you feel easy and whole hearted, as if nothing ailed you, when the symptoms of death are strong upon you. We can weep and lament over the sick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave : but shall we drop no tears this

day over dying souls, that are so numerous among us? What renders the case more affecting is, that they perish by their own wilful obstinacy, under the hands of an all-healing Physician:—*O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughters of my people!* Ye secure and whole-hearted sinners, must it not shock you to think that Jesus Christ, the only Physician, gives you up? You see, in my text, he looks upon you as persons that he has no business with. He had rather converse with publicans and sinners than with you, as having more hopes of success among them. Let publicans and sinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jesus. Come, ye profligates and libertines, drunkards, swearers, whoremongers, come sinners of the most abandoned characters, apply to this Physician. He is willing to heal you: He offers you healing. *Wilt thou be made whole?* is his question to you this day. He is also perfectly able, able to save to the uttermost, however inveterate your disease may be. If the children of the kingdom shut themselves out; if self-righteous Pharisees reject this Physician, and die in their sin, do you come in; put yourselves under his care, submit to his prescriptions, and you shall yet live, and be restored to perfect health, and eternal life. Rugged as you are, you are very proper materials for the temple of God. If you are sensibly sick, it should not discourage you from entering yourselves into Christ's hospital, and putting yourselves under his care; nay, this should even encourage you. Your being sick of sin is a necessary qualification to render you his patients: they are such he loves to converse with, and they are only such who are recovered by him. Therefore this day give yourselves up to him as his willing patients. Cry to him to undertake your case: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.* Submit to his prescriptions, and follow his directions, and you shall live forever.

I shall conclude my subject, by giving answers from it to some questions that may arise in your minds on this occasion.

What is the reason that the world lies in such a dead security around us? Whence is it there is so much sin in the world, and so little fear of punishment? Whence is it that men will entertain such hopes of heaven upon such slight evidences, or rather with the full evidence of the word of God against them? Alas! the reason is, they are whole in their own imagination: they

think themselves well, and therefore apprehend no danger, but lie in a dead, inactive sleep.

What is the reason why so many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Whence is it that there are so many prayerless families and prayerless closets among us? Why is the Bible thrown by in some families, as a piece of useless lumber? Why is the house of God so thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almost deserted? Why is christian conversation so unfashionable? and why do we hear so few inquiries from sinners, what they shall do to be saved? The reason is, they imagine themselves well; they are whole-hearted; and, therefore, it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery: they think they have no more to do with them than persons in health with physic. The only method to bring to use those means in earnest, is to make them sensible of their dangerous disease. And O! that their ministers may use all proper means with them for this end, and, that divine grace may render them effectual!

What is the reason that the means of grace are attended upon by others with so much formality and indifference? Whence is it there are so many lukewarm, spiritless prayers, and solemn mockeries of the great God? so many wandering eyes and wandering hearts in the heavenly exercise of praise, and in hearing the most solemn and affecting truths? Whence is it that all the religion of many is nothing but a dull round of insipid, lifeless formalities! Alas! the same reason returns; they are whole in their own conceit. And how can they, while they flatter themselves with this imagination, use those means in earnest, which are intended for the recovery of the sick? The sick will use them in earnest; but to others they are mere customary formalities.

Would you know what is the reason that the blessed Jesus, the most glorious and benevolent person that ever appeared in our world, is so generally neglected? O! why is his love forgotten by those very creatures for whom he shed his blood? Why are there not more longings and cries for him? Why is not a Saviour, an almighty and complete Saviour, more sought after by perishing sinners? Why is his name of so little importance among them? How comes it to pass, that he may continue for months, for years, for scores of years, offering salvation to them, entreating, commanding and persuading them to accept it, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring upon them-

selves by rejecting it? Whence is it that, after all, he is despised and rejected of men, and that but very few will give him suitable entertainment?—Whence is this shocking conduct in reasonable creatures? O it is the same old reason still; they are whole-hearted, and do not feel themselves dangerously ill; and how then can they be solicitous about a physician!

What is the reason that the gospel, which reveals and offers life and salvation to the world, meets with so cold a reception? Why does not the way of salvation therein discovered spread transport and praise over all the earth? Why does not the song of angels sound from every human tongue, *Glory to God in the highest for peace proclaimed on earth, and good-will towards men?* Why does the christian world in general practically despise that religion which they profess? O! it is because they are whole in their own imaginations, though dying by thousands all over the world. It is because they are not sensible of their need of the gospel and its blessings. O! if they were but once sensible how dangerously ill they are, they would soon change their opinion.

Let me bring this matter still nearer home. Whence is it that the gospel, even with all the disadvantages that attend it from my unskilful lips, does not meet with a more affectionate welcome among you? There are many, I am afraid, who statedly or occasionally attend here to hear the gospel, who yet despise it in their hearts, or do not affectionately embrace it. And what is the reason of this? May I not venture to affirm, that the gospel has been dear to some, who have sat under no better ministry? Must not this be the reason? That there are multitudes of whole-hearted sinners, even among us, that mingle among us in the same assembly, and hear the gospel from the same lips! Multitudes who are insensible of their disease, and consequently of their need of a physician! O! inquire, whether this be not the true reason why the gospel meets with such a cold reception among us.

Would you know why so many fools make a mock of sin! Why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it! Why they are every day singing, and every day merry, thoughtless and gay! Why they can love and delight in sin, which God hates, and which he has threatened with such heavy vengeance? Alas! the reason is, they are whole: they do not look upon sin as a deadly disease that requires a cure, but as their

health which ought to be cherished. This is the disease under which our body politic now languishes. It is this disease that enfeebles our councils and undertakings ; but who suspects that this has any bad influence in the case ? Who endeavours the cure of this, as the most effectual cure for a languishing, bleeding country !

What is the reason that men are cautious of coming near a house infected with a contagious sickness, and that duty itself can hardly constrain them to enter, but that they can venture their souls without cause into ensnaring company, and within the sphere of temptation ? Whence is it, that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, they will submit to the most self-denying regimen, take the most nauseous draughts, and be at great pains and expense, whilst, for their souls, they will take no pains, use no means, deny themselves in no gratification ? What is the reason of this ? O ! it is the same reason still ; they do not feel the least sickness of their souls, but imagine they have a firm, invulnerable constitution, incapable of infection in the most contagious places, and that it will recover by its native strength, without any extrinsic help.

Would you know why there is so much spiritual pride and vanity in the world ? why so many religious *Thrasos*, vain boasters, who imagine they can turn to God when they please, in their own strength, and who pretend they can perform such great things in religion, when they are disposed to make the attempt ? O ! it is because they do not know they are sick : they do not feel themselves enfeebled by sin, and disabled from doing any thing truly good. You have seen some in a delirium, who imagined they were well, able to go about, and perform their usual business, when in the mean time they were under the power of a deadly disease, and the symptoms of death perhaps then upon them. Just so it is with these ostentatious boasters ; and could you but cure their delirium, and make them sensible of their disorders, they would soon feel and confess themselves poor, weak, languishing creatures, unable to do any thing, but just as they receive strength from on high.

Would you know why so many hate faithful preaching, and resent it if any means are used for their recovery ? It is because they imagine themselves well ; and such do not like to be teased with the importunities of a physician, nor to have disagreeable

medicines forced upon them. O! were they but sensible of their condition, they would willingly submit to the prescriptions.

Would you know where you should begin your religion; or what is the grand preparative for your embracing the gospel in such a manner as to be saved by it? To this interesting inquiry you may easily infer an answer from what has been said. Begin your religion in a deep sense of sin; let your wound be probed to the quick, in order to a thorough cure, otherwise it would be but slightly skinned over, and it will again break out, and prove more dangerous than ever. Labour to get a deep sense of your disease, and then you will so give yourselves up to the physician, that he may apply to you what he thinks proper, and make an effectual cure.

Some of you perhaps have wondered why you see poor mourning creatures here and there, that cannot live as you do, thoughtless, careless, and unaffected. You ascribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciseness, to hypocrisy, or an affectation of singularity. But I will tell you the true reason. They are sick; whereas you imagine yourselves well; and you cannot wonder that the sick and the healthy should behave in a different manner. Why do they not neglect Jesus Christ as you do? O! it is because they are sick, heart-sick, and therefore must long and cry for a physician. Why do they not indulge themselves in sin as you do? It is because they are sick of it. They see it to be a mortal poison, and they cannot be easy while they feel it working through their frame. Why do they use the means with so much earnestness? Why do they pray, and hear, and attend upon every religious ordinance with so much zeal and solicitude; Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careless, formal way, or entirely neglect them? O! the reason is, they are sick, heart-sick, and they are using these means for their recovery. And did you view yourselves in the same just light, you would use them too: yes, you would be as strict, as earnest, as laborious as any of them. Why do they not, like you, abandon themselves, and devote all their time to some worldly pursuit? O! it is because they are sick, and must take time for the use of means for their recovery, whatever be omitted. Why are they so much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is because they are afraid of a relapse, and that sin, their old disease, will renew its strength. Whence are they so often filled with doubts, and fears, and anxious perplexities? O! it is because

the symptoms of the disorder are doubtful, and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are satisfied in this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And poor sick souls, be of good cheer ; you shall yet be healed. Yes, there is balm in Gilead ; there is a Physician there : Jesus can heal you : and, blessed be his name, he is as willing, as he is able. Continue stedfast in the use of the means appointed for your recovery, and he will make them efficacious. Yes, these sick souls of yours shall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel ; and you shall er e long be advanced to the region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more say, I am sick ; where you shall breathe a pure salubrious air, agreeable to your delicate constitutions, and be vigorous and lively forever.

Do not think much of it, that a disease so inveterate and mortal, should be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not last long ; and if it does but succeed, the pain and self-denial will be infinitely more than compensated.

The deep sense of your disorder is often discouraging to you : O ! you are afraid it will at last prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. The persons that I cannot speak one comfortable word to, are not of your character ; they are the secure, whole-hearted sinners : but for you there is strong consolation ; so strong that it may bear down all your fears before it. The sense of your disorder qualifies you for the Physician, and renders you proper objects of his care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the characters of the persons that he has to do with, and who are recovering under his hands. And are not these your characters ? They are indeed humbling and mortifying ; but, O ! they are encouraging, as they prepare you for Christ's healing care.

But as for you, whole-hearted sinners, I must pronounce you lost and dead souls. Jesus himself has declared, that he has no business with such as you. And if he casts you off, O ! what other physician can you employ ? Alas ! you will die in your sins ! Die in your sins ! O ! dreadful ! better die in a ditch, or a dungeon, than die in your sins ! Therefore now labour to be sensible of your disorder, while it is curable ; for all that are not healed in this life, are given up as incurable forever. Now apply to Christ as a Physician, for he is willing to undertake your cure.

Sermon 53.

A SIGHT OF CHRIST THE DESIRE AND DELIGHT OF SAINTS IN ALL AGES.*

JOHN VIII. 56.—*Your father Abraham rejoiced,* [earnestly desired] *to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

WHEN we see the crowd, the unthinking majority of mankind in our day, neglect the Lord Jesus, we see nothing new. This neglect is indeed stupid, ungrateful, criminal, and extremely affecting and lamentable; but in this respect as well as others, *there is no new thing under the sun.* The blessed Jesus has been despised and rejected of men, in every age, ever since sin first entered into the world, and raised enmity against him in the mind of man.

But, blessed be God, such excellency has attracted love and admiration in every age. He has been loved and adored, not only by the angels who know him best, and are spectators of his glory in his native heaven, where he keeps his court in conspicuous splendour, but also by some poor sinners of the race of man, in every period of time, since his glory first dawned upon the world in that early promise, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. John and his cotemporary christians, who lived upon earth when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men,* beheld his glory, God-like glory, *as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. In these dregs of time, *when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold,* there are some, nay, there are many scattered here and there through the world, who believe in and love an unseen Saviour; and, while they believe and love, *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* 1 Pet. i 8. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also, and all the pious patriarchs, who lived in the early dawn of the gospel-light, looked forward with eager eyes to the promised and expected rising of the Sun of righteousness. His beams were but faintly reflected upon them; yet they could distinguish his light from that of every inferior luminary. They foresaw some illustrious personage, superior to themselves, and all the ordinary messen-

* Sacramental Sermon.

gers of God, about to appear in the world ; and though it does not appear to me that they distinctly knew who he should be, or what should be the peculiarities of his office, and how he should perform it,* yet they expected him under the welcome character of a Deliverer, and that in some way which divine wisdom would appoint he should bring salvation to penitent sinners. Thus Jesus congratulates his disciples upon their peculiar privilege, above the best men of the preceding times : *Blessed are your eyes, for they see : and your ears, for they hear : for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them : and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* Matt. xiii. 16, 17. Their desiring to hear and see these things, which the gospel reveals, implies that they had some general imperfect knowledge of them ; for there can be no desire at all of a thing entirely unknown : but their knowledge was indistinct and obscure, and not satisfactory to their pious curiosity. Therefore, as St. Peter informs us, the prophets did not fully understand their own prophecies, but *inquired and searched diligently concerning the salvation and grace* now brought to us ; *searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow ; to whom it was revealed, that not they, but we, should fully enjoy the advantage of their own prophecies, or that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things,* not only the prophets, but even *the angels* of heaven, those superior intelligences, *desire to look into* and study. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

To the same purpose St. Paul speaks concerning Abraham, Noah, and the other pious patriarchs : *These all died in faith, not having received the promises ;* that is, the accomplishment of them, *but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them,*

* It is evident, that the apostles before Christ's resurrection, though they enjoyed the light not only of the ancient types, promises, and prophecies, but also of many instructions from his own lips, yet were ignorant of his death and resurrection, the nature and extent of his kingdom, and many other important peculiarities of the gospel. And much more so, may we suppose, were the prophets and good men of ancient times. Several great divines have, I think, represented their faith as much more particular and distinct than it appears to have been.

and embraced them ; that is, they saw by faith, though afar off, at the distance of thousands of years, the blessings contained in those early promises, particularly that great, all-comprehending blessing, the Messiah ; and were persuaded they would be fulfilled in due time, and embraced them with eager affection and confidence, as their highest hope and happiness.

This is the influence which even the faint discovery of a Saviour had upon good men many ages ago ; but St. Paul tells us, whose privilege it was to live in gospel-day, that *God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Heb xi. 13, 40 : for us he hath provided the clear revelation of the gospel ; and shall not this have a proportionable influence upon us ? We should at least be as much affected with these things as Abraham, who was far inferior to us in external advantages ; and how Abraham was affected, we are told by Jesus himself in the text : *Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was glad.*

The Jews, in the context, are pleading the cause of their own pride and self-confidence, against some just reflections which Christ had made upon them. When he insinuates that they were slaves to sin, and therefore stood in need of freedom from him, they resent it as a scandalous imputation, intolerable to a people so proud and tenacious of their liberty ; and either not understanding in what sense he meant they were slaves, or imagining that they could not be the servants of sin, who were the natural descendants of Abraham, they think to defend themselves by pleading, *We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest thou, ye shall be made free ?* I cannot see how they could have made good this assertion ; for they had been in bondage to the Babylonians, the Syrians, and the Greeks, and were then in subjection to the Roman empire ; but what is there so false or absurd, but men will plead in their own defence, when once they have renounced the gospel ? Jesus, in his answer, tells them, that the dispute at present was not, who was their natural father ? but, who was their father in a moral sense ? And he lays down this principle, upon which to settle their moral genealogy, namely, that they were his children, whom they resembled in temper and practice. Now they did not resemble Abraham, much less God, whom they also called their Father ; and therefore they were not the children of Abraham, or of God, in such a sense as to be free from slavery to sin ; which was the sense

then under consideration : but they resembled the devil in doing his lusts and particularly in their love of falsehood, and enmity to truth : and therefore, says he, *Ye are of your father the devil.* In the progress of the debate, the Jews were offended, because Christ insinuated that he was greater than Abraham and the prophets. And my text may be considered as referring both to this and the former argument. As referring to the last, it may be thus understood : " Abraham himself was sensible how much I am superior to him ; for he rejoiced at the distant sight of my day, when a much greater Person than he should appear upon the stage of the world, from whom himself, as well as his posterity, and all nations of the earth, should receive the most important blessings." As referring to the former, the meaning may be : " You cannot be the genuine children of Abraham, in the sense now under consideration ; for you are not at all like him. You live in my day, and yet rejoice not in it ; but he earnestly desired a sight of it, and rejoiced in the sight, though faint and afar off. His disposition and yours towards me, are entirely different, and therefore you cannot be his true spiritual children." Thus, in both these views, the text contains a conclusive argument in vindication of Jesus Christ, and in confutation of his enemies.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. The day of Christ primarily signifies the time when he appeared in the flesh, and conversed with men. So the days of John the Baptist, the days of Noah, &c. signify the time when John the Baptist and Noah lived upon earth. Matt. xi. 12, and chap. xxiv. 37. But we are to consider the Lord Jesus as coming into the world under a public character ; that is, as a Saviour of sinners, and as the improver of the Mosaic and patriarchal religion, by the introduction of the gospel dispensation ; and therefore the day of Christ, which Abraham desired to see, must signify the time when he should appear upon earth as a great prophet, to make a more perfect revelation of the will of God ; the time when he should offer the great propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world, of which the sacrifices of former dispensations were but types and shadows ; the time when he should receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom from the ancient of days, which should not be confined to the Jews alone, but extend to *all people, nations, and languages,* Dan. vii. 14, or, in other words, the time when the great radical promise to Abraham should be fulfilled, *That in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.*

Gen. xxii. 18. The time when the dispensation of the gospel should be set up in its full glory, the most perfect dispensation of religion on this side heaven; which is not to give way to another, like that of Moses, but to continue to the end of the world. This is the illustrious day here intended: and according to this explication, you see it includes not only the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, but also the whole space from that time to the end of the world, or the whole time of the gospel dispensation. This is a long and glorious day, and in this day it is our happy lot to live. Abraham would have thought himself happy to live in the same age with us: He would rather have lived in Hanover* than in Canaan with all his riches; and would rather have been a member of our church, than the great patriarch of the Jewish church.

The time of Christ's appearance upon earth, and of the gospel dispensation introduced by him, may be called a day, not only in conformity to the usual language of scripture, in which the time of a person's life, the duration of a thing, or the time allotted for any business, is called a day, though it should contain many hundreds or thousands of natural days; I say, it may be called a day, not only on this account, but also to intimate, that it is a season of light to the moral world, a season when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon this benighted earth, pierces the glooms of ignorance that covered it, and brings the deepest mysteries to light; a season, when the perfections of the divine nature, the way of pardon and acceptance for obnoxious mankind, the wonders of the unseen world, and the things that belong to our peace, are displayed in full splendour. The night of heathen darkness, and the twilight of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensation, kindle into day, wherever the gospel shines. Abraham lived in the twilight or early dawn; and therefore, says Christ, *he desired to see my day.* It is translated he *rejoiced* to see my day; and it must be owned, this is the usual sense of the original word;† but this cannot be its meaning here, for this would

* The name of a county in Virginia, where this sermon was preached.

† ἠγαλλιάσατο—Since γαλλιῶμαι, which is commonly used metaphorically, and signifies *to exult* or *leap for joy*, literally signifies *to leap*, why may it not be understood literally without a metaphor in this place? As if he he had said, "Abraham leaped up, he raised himself like one endeavouring to catch a glance of some distant object, that he might see the distant gleamings of Christ's day."— But this new criticism I only hint, and submit it to examination.

The editor of these Discourses of Mr. Davies, thinks it not improper to subjoin a criticism upon this word from Mr. Anthony Blackwall.—"I

make a needless tautology with the last part of the verse, *he was glad.* To rejoice and to be glad, is the same thing ; but it would hardly be sense to say, *Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and rejoiced.* Besides, to rejoice that he might see, seems absurd ; for his rejoicing could not be to the end that he might see, but because he did see. I therefore conclude the word here must signify a strong transport of desire, and should be rendered, "your father Abraham earnestly desired that he might see my day ; he wished to live in an age when Christ and the gospel should be fully revealed. From the dawn, he looked forward with eager desire to see the sun rising, and the heavenly day shining around him, revealing to his view those lovely prospects which were then wrapt in darkness. He longed to see that illustrious personage springing from his seed," *in whom all nations should be blessed,* "and who was his Lord and Saviour, as well as his Son."

Nor was his desire in vain : for Jesus adds, *he saw it ;* that is, my day. His desire was granted, and he was favoured with the sight he longed for. But here it may be queried, "how, or in what sense, could Abraham be said to see Christ's day, since he died so long before his appearance in the flesh ? To this sundry answers have been given, particularly, 1. That he saw Christ's day by faith in the promises given him, of the accomplishment of which he was confident ; and this confidence inspired him with joy. *Faith,* says the apostle, *is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,* Heb. xi. 1, and such was Abraham's faith in the promise of a Messiah. He saw his day by faith, and was persuaded of his certain appearance, and embraced him, as though he had been then in the reach of his arms. 2. Abraham might be said to see the day of Christ in that strange transaction, the offering up of his own son Isaac. This is the most striking typical representation, I think, which we

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beg my reader's leave, says he, to propose one conjecture, by putting down ἠγαλλιάσῃμαι, as a peculiarity in St. John, signifying *to desire with vehemence.* And this sense affixed to it, which is not strained or unnatural, will solve what seems to me to be a gross tautology in our translation. It is this, "he rejoiced to see my day, and saw it, and was glad ;" that is, he was glad to see my day, and saw it, and so was glad..—In this signification it runs easy and clean, he earnestly wished or desired to see my day, and saw it and rejoiced. The Persian, Syriac, and Arabic versions all give it this sense, and the particle ἵνα in the original, seems to require it.—It is a very natural metonymy, whereby antecedents and consequents are put for each other." *Sacred Classics,* Vol. i. p. 35, 36.

find in the whole Bible, of the manner in which the world should be redeemed by Jesus Christ; namely, by human sacrifice, and by God's making his own Son a propitiatory sacrifice, as Abraham was commanded to offer up his; and probably this seemingly hard and unnatural trial was imposed upon him, as a peculiar favour, that he might see by a significant action, what he so earnestly longed to see, the manner of man's redemption. This welcome sight heprobably had upon mount Moriah, where he went to offer up his only Son. And the inscription he, as it were, left upon that mount, may intimate thus much. *In the mount of the Lord it* (that is, the day of Christ) *shall be seen.* Gen. xxii. 14. This may also be St. Paul's meaning, when he says, Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure, or typical representation, which plainly pre-signified to him the resurrection of Christ from the dead, without a figure; that is literally, after he had been actually sacrificed for the sins of men.* This appears to me as probable a sense as any. Yet 3. Perhaps it may mean, that when Jehovah appeared to Abraham in human form; and familiarly conversed with him, it was a prelude to his incarnation, and gave him a clear idea of the day of Christ's actual appearance in the flesh.

But in whatever sense he saw it, it was a very welcome and joyful sight to him; for Jesus farther tells us, *he saw it, and was glad.* Light is sweet; but no light was so sweet to Abraham's eyes as that of *the day of the Son of Man.* He saw him not as Simeon, when he took him in his arms, and wished that he might never take up any thing else, but depart in peace from this world of sin and sorrow; but Abraham saw him in such a light, as to fill his heart with joy and gladness, though only through the medium of faith, and not of sense.

These remarks may suffice to explain the text, as it refers to this patriarch: but it is your personal advantage I aim at, and therefore I shall make some reflections upon it, as it may be accommodated to you: and the reflections are such as these:

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* Heb. xi. 19. Dr. Warburton in his Divine Legation, offers so many plausible things in favour of this sense, that I think it has some considerable appearance of probability. And thus he and Wolfius apply their text urging that ἐν παραβολῇ, answers to and signifies a typical representation. The word καὶ prefixed, καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ, which shews there is a particular stress to be laid upon ἐν παραβολῇ, confirms this exposition: as if he had said, "he received him from the dead, not only as he narrowly escaped death, but also in a figure; that is, as a figure or type of something future."

That the dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day :

That it is a day which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of :

That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Jesus Christ, and his gospel :

That these desires shall be accomplished : and,

That the accomplishment of them affords great joy.

I. The dispensation of the gospel may be called a bright and illustrious day.

When John the Baptist the forerunner of Christ, was born, the morning-star arose, or, as his father Zacharias expresses it, *The-day spring from on high visited us.* Jesus is *the Sun of righteousness*, Mal. iv. 2. ; *the Light of the world*, John viii. 12, and chapter xii. 46 ; *a light to lighten Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*, Luke ii. 32. ; and when he made his appearance in the world, then we are told, *The people that sat in darkness saw great light ; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light sprung up.* Matt. iv. 16. To carry on the metaphor with uniformity the gospel is called the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. the light, 2 Cor. iv 4. a marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9. a true light shining, when the darkness is past, 1 John ii. 8. and christians are said to be light, Eph. v. 8.—*the children of the light and the day.* 1 Thess. v. 5.

There is good reason for the use of this significant metaphorical language ; for as the day discovers the fair face of nature, and opens her lovely prospects to view, which were unseen while covered with darkness, so the gospel reveals the perfections of God, the wonderful scheme of Providence, the beauties of holiness, the nature of true religion, the duty of man in all its extent, the wonders of the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, and the method in which obnoxious sinners of the race of man may be reconciled to God, the prospects of life and immortality, and the important realities of the eternal world. All these are brought to light by the gospel, after they had long been concealed, or seen but faintly through the glimmering light of reason in the heathen, or the typical or prophetical revelation of the Mosaic dispensation.

The gospel day, like a light shining in a dark place, pierces the darkness of the human heart, reveals the mysteries of iniquity, and the depths of Satan there, and discovers sin in all its native

deformities. This penetrating light, when enforced by his power who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has flashed conviction upon many a secure conscience, and opened the most surprising discoveries to many a blind mind. The gospel, like clear day-light, shews us the way of duty and happiness, for which the world had long groped in darkness, so that now we may walk in it without stumbling; for *if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light.*—John xi. 9, 10.

Divine things are not only brought to light by the gospel, but also represented in the most amiable and engaging view; especially when there is not only a clear medium without, but the organ of spiritual vision, the mind, is rectified so as to be able to perceive those objects in this medium. If we should suppose a man had spent twenty years of his life in darkness, and never seen nature about him in that lovely and magnificent view in which it appears through the medium of light, and should he be suddenly brought into the light, how would he be overwhelmed with delightful astonishment at the first sight of the universe.—What amazing prospects, what new and glorious wonders would open to his eyes! How different would the face of nature appear from the view he had of it while an inhabitant of darkness! Thus is the sinner surprised, when not only the gospel shines round him, but his mind is also enlightened to view divine things in that heavenly light. Then, as St. Peter expresses it, he is brought *out of darkness into God's marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. a light that represents the most marvellous things to his astonished sight. Then in what a new and glorious light does the great God appear, and all the truths revealed in the gospel! What new and surprising views has he of himself, of sin, and of the eternal world! all is real, interesting and affecting! O! my brethren, have you ever been introduced into this marvellous light? or are you, like the birds of night, lovers and inhabitants of darkness still?

Again, In that darkness which overspread the world before the introduction of christianity, the wicked spirits of hell, like beasts of prey, roamed this wilderness and discovered great power in their oracles, in possessing the bodies of men, &c. But when the gospel shone upon the world in its meridian glory, then these terrors of the night fled to their den, and could no more roam at large, as they had done.

The day is the time for work and action : so the gospel day is the season to work out our salvation. It is not a time for sleep and sloth, but for labour and action. *This is the accepted time ; this is the day of salvation.*

This, my brethren, is the glorious and blessed day in which we live. Let us therefore inquire, *Are we the children of the light and of the day ?* For this purpose inquire, whether it is day within, as well as without ? that is, whether your minds have been divinely enlightened within, as the light of the gospel shines round you without ? Is not that sacred light to some of you like the sun to a blind man ? that is, it makes day without him, but all is dark to him, and he sees nothing ! Are there not some of you blind to the glory of God in the gospel, to the evil of sin, and the great realities of the eternal world ! The light shines indeed, but it shines in a thick malignant darkness, that comprehends it not ; a darkness impenetrable even to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Is not your heart a dungeon of darkness, where the vilest lusts crawl, like toads and serpents ? Do you not hate the light, and refuse to come into the light, lest your evil deeds should be reproved ? Do you not practise the works of darkness, works that will not bear the public view, much less the examination of the supreme tribunal ? Have you ever beheld *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the Word made flesh, and dwelling among men, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ?* O ! have you ever seen how lovely, how suitable, and how glorious that Saviour is, who is revealed in the gospel ? I beg you would put these questions home to your hearts, that you may know whether you are the children of the light, or whether you are in darkness even until now.

If you have hitherto chosen darkness rather than light, remember, the gospel, which has lighted many a pilgrim to heaven, will only shew you the way to hell, and bring you, as it were, to a more horrible precipice, from whence you will fall with the greater violence into the pit. If you perish from under the gospel, it will be with a peculiarly aggravated destruction. *Tophet has been prepared of old ;* and, like a furnace always supplied, it has been heating more and more for thousands of years, and now under the gospel, it is heated more than ever ; and the hottest place there is reserved for you, if you still resist the light, and continue in darkness. O ! remember who it was that made that awful declaration, *This is the condemnation ;* that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, *that light is come*

into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. John iii. 19. *If the gospel be hid, it is only to them that are lost.* 2 Cor. iv. 3.

But I doubt not but sundry of you not only have day without, but within you: *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed are your eyes, for they see.* And O! what affecting sights have they seen! what vileness and deformity in sin! and what beauty in holiness! what corruption and depravity in yourselves, and what glory and excellency in God! what meanness and unworthiness in yourselves, and what loveliness, what all-perfect righteousness, with attractive glory in Jesus Christ! what vanity in this world, and what reality and importance in the world to come! Well, this day is but the dawn of immortal day, which you shall enjoy in heaven. You are children of light, and you are hastening to that world, where God himself shall be your light, and there shall be no more night. Therefore, *walk as the children of light, and let your light so shine before men, that they, by seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Bless God that the gospel shines around you, and opens such discoveries to your view. To-day it shews you a feast of fat things for hungry souls; it shews you that strange sight, which struck all nature with horror, when it first appeared; I mean the Son of God hanging on a cross, and expiring there for guilty men. This ordinance is a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to see the love and agonies of Jesus, the great atonement he made for sin, and the method of your pardon and salvation.—Come then, ye children of light, come and gaze, and wonder at these astonishing sights!

Again, Since it is day-time with us, let us shake off slumber, and rise to work. Awake to righteousness, sinners! Awake, and call upon God, and betake yourselves to work; to the important, but long delayed and neglected work of salvation. The night of death is coming, when no man can work: Then the Sun of righteousness will be set, and the day of the gospel be over, as to you; and the Lord will cause darkness, and your feet will stumble on the dark mountains, and the shadows of the everlasting night shall be stretched out over your heads. Now, therefore, rise, and do the work of life: do it now, in this your day; or it must remain forever undone. And ye, who are the children of the light,

abound in the work of the Lord, while your day lasts. Never let him find you idle, but always busy in doing good. Do not you sleep, as do others; but watch and be sober. God has distinguished you with his grace, above thousands of his eminent servants; and this lays you under peculiar obligations of duty to him:—Which leads me to add,

II. That the dispensation of the gospel is a day, which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of.

The most that they generally knew was, that religion should be much improved, and the world receive great advantage, by some illustrious person that should arise;—and they desired themselves to share in that improvement and advantage. They had a general persuasion that God was reconcileable; but, O! to know the person by whom, and the manner in which this reconciliation was to be brought about! They had many intimations that it was to be brought about by sacrifice, or the offering up the innocent for the guilty; but they wanted nearer views of this great mystery. They had ordinances of worship divinely instituted; but these were so expensive, burdensome, and comparatively carnal, that it is no wonder they looked forward with eager eyes to the time of reformation, when a more easy, spiritual and noble method of worship would be introduced: they hoped for happiness beyond the grave, and believed a future state of rewards and punishments; but the sanctions of the dispensations under which they lived, consisted so much in temporal rewards and punishments, as to render those of the world to come less clear and affecting.—No wonder then they longed for gospel day, by which life alone and immortality are brought fully to light, and all doubts and suspicions entirely removed. In short, so much darkness, uncertainty and perplexity, attended many things of great importance, that are now clearly revealed, that it was natural and unavoidable for every good man that was concerned to please God, and enjoy his favour, to desire farther satisfaction, and look forward with eager eyes to the rising Sun, which should cast a divine light upon these interesting secrets.

Now this happiness, which they so ardently desired, we enjoy: and shall we make light of it, and neglect to improve our peculiar privileges? How would Abraham have rejoiced to hear what we hear this day, and sit down at the sacred table, which is now prepared for us! And shall we dare to neglect it, or attend upon it in a languid, careless, irreverent manner! Abraham would

have willingly exchanged his personal converse with Jehovah, and all his privileges as the patriarch of the Jewish church, for the privilege of the meanest christian among us. And shall not we esteem and improve what he esteemed so very highly, and longed for so ardently ! Brethren, if we do not all crowd into heaven in a body, it is our own fault in a peculiar degree. Our external advantages for religion are greater than those of Abraham, the friend of God ; than those of Moses, who *conversed with him face to face, as a man with his friend ;* of David, the man after God's own heart ; and of the many thousands that entered the gates of heaven, before Jesus left it to make his appearance in our world. And did they obtain salvation by a Redeemer so little known, and shall any of us perish, when he is so clearly revealed to us, and so explicitly proposed to our acceptance ? God forbid ! Whatever became of sinners in Canaan, or Greece, or Rome, where they had prophets or philosophers, but no Jesus to shew them the path of life, O ! let sinners in Hanover press into the kingdom of heaven. For shame, let them seek salvation, lest Jews and heathens, and all the world, rise up in judgment against them. But I observed from the text,

III. That good men earnestly desire clear discoveries of Christ and his gospel.

This was not peculiar to Abraham and the Old Testament saints, but it is common to all good men in all ages and countries : and if you belong to their number, this is your disposition. O ! how you long to know more of Jesus, and dive deeper into the mysteries of his gospel ! How are you mortified and grieved for your ignorance ! And how sweet is every beam of heavenly light, that breaks in upon your minds, and discovers more of the glory of Christ to you, and the wonders of his gospel ! This was your end (was it not ?) in coming hither to-day ; and for this end you intend to sit down at his table, even that you may see the Lord Jesus in an advantageous point of view by faith, and be more charmed with his glories ? Is not this what you desire and long for ? Well, for your comfort, I can assure you,

IV. That these desires shall be accomplished.

Abraham desired to see Christ's day, and he saw it : his desires were fulfilled. And he was not the only one to whom divine veracity performed its promise, and divine goodness bestowed its bounties. No, the same blessing has been conferred upon

every soul, in every age and country, that, like him, earnestly desired Jesus Christ. This desire pre-supposes a deep sense of our guilt and depravity, and of our inability to make atonement for our sin, or to sanctify our nature, and prepare ourselves for heaven, that region of perfect holiness: and it also implies a general conviction of the glory and excellency of Jesus Christ, and his suitableness to our case. Desires proceeding from such a sense of conviction, are lively and operative, and will set us in action to obtain the thing desired. They are not lazy inactive desires, which persons profess, and yet remain all the day idle, and never exert their utmost strength in earnest endeavours to obtain an interest in Christ, as their supreme good and highest happiness. Such active desires are connected with the promises of eternal veracity, which almighty power will certainly perform. Therefore, fear not, ye that seek Jesus who was crucified. You shall not always pine away with hungry, eager desires and pantings for him, but your utmost wishes shall be accomplished, in the enjoyment of the good you desire. And if ever you have had any experience in this case, I need hardly tell you,

V. That the accomplishment of these desires affords great joy.

Abraham had his desire of seeing Christ's day fulfilled; and it inspired him with joy: *he saw it and was glad.* How transporting, to view the glory of God shining in the gospel! to contemplate the love, the grace, and all-sufficient fulness of Jesus! to feel the lively emotions of proper affections towards him, and all those heavenly exercises of mind, which attend the sight of Jesus Christ in the gospel! What is heaven, but the day of Christ; a brighter day indeed, but enlightened by the same sun that shines in the gospel; *the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Rev. xxi. 23. Therefore as much as you enjoy of this sacred light, so much of heaven do you enjoy on earth.

And now, to conclude.—You have heard of Jesus Christ, and of the disposition of Abraham, and all good men towards him. But is not this all mystery and unintelligible talk to some of you? You never have experienced any thing like it. And can you expect salvation from a neglected unknown Saviour! Or are you able to save yourselves without him! Alas! both are impossible. Therefore, my brethren, this day admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, be thoroughly convinced of your own unworthiness of salvation by natural means, or the guidance of your own

wisdom, pray earnestly for spiritual help from above, in and through a glorious and all-powerful Mediator, and never be easy till you get out of darkness into day.

As for the children of light, let them surround the table of their Lord, and there place themselves under the warm enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness.

Sermon 54.

THE LAW AND GOSPEL.

GAL. III. 23.—*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

IN such a time of general deadness and security as this, it may really afford me painful perplexity what subject to choose. Now this and now that occurs to my mind, and engages my thoughts to pursue it for a while; but after many fluctuations and perplexities, I have at length fixed upon this text, and determined to open to you the nature of the Law and Gospel, and your concern with each of them: and I have this encouragement, that this may be styled an Apostolic subject, by way of eminence, and is that very doctrine which did such mighty execution among the Jews and Gentiles, and converted thousands to the faith of Christ, upon the first publication of christianity. The Law and Gospel were the grand topics of St. Paul's preaching, if we may judge of his sermons by his Epistles; for in his Epistles, particularly those to the Romans and Galatians, he insists at large upon these subjects. These may also properly be called the doctrine of the reformation from Popery; for no sooner did that sacred light dawn, than it began immediately to clear up the nature and the difference between the Law and the Gospel, and the condition of mankind as under the one or the other of these constitutions. Luther, in particular, made this the great scope of his preaching and writings; and he wrote an excellent commentary upon this epistle to the Galatians for this very purpose. And who knows but such a subject as this, which has been the ancient weapon for demolishing the kingdom of Satan, and wounding impenitent hearts, may do some execution, through the divine blessing, even when managed by my unskilful hand? Be the event what it will, in the name of the Lord, I would make the attempt.

I shall be the shorter at present, in explaining the text, because the whole of the following discourse will tend to reflect light upon it.

Faith, in my text, and in sundry places in this epistle, seems to have a complex signification: it signifies the object of faith, revealed in the gospel, or the method of salvation through faith in the righteousness of Christ; and it also signifies the grace of faith in the soul, or a hearty compliance with this way of salvation, so that this expression, *before faith came*, refers to the time before the doctrine of faith was revealed in the gospel to the Galatians, and before the grace of faith was wrought in their hearts. Here it may be proper to observe, that the members of the primitive church in general, and particularly that in Galatia, were brought under the gospel dispensation, and embraced the doctrine of the gospel by faith at one and the same time. But they were not like us, educated under the gospel dispensation; for part of them had been Jews, educated under the Mosaic dispensation, which by way of eminence is frequently called the Law; and, as they were under the legal dispensation, they were generally under the influence of a legal spirit; that is, they sought for justification by their own works of obedience to that law.

Another part of them had been educated Heathens, and were destitute at once of the revelation of the gospel, and of faith in it. Of this sort the generality of the Galatians had been. And yet St. Paul represents them also as having been under the law, not the Jewish or Mosaic law, which the Gentiles had no concern with, but the law of nature, which is universally binding upon all mankind. And as they were under this law, they were also possessed of a legal spirit; that is, they sought salvation by their own obedience to it, as the only way which they knew, and which was natural to them. But, when the gospel dispensation was set up in the world, and the doctrine of faith preached to them, they immediately believed, and so were freed from the outward dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit, at once; and they heard the doctrine, and received the outward dispensation of the gospel, and savingly believed, "at one and the same time." Hence the apostle speaks of their being delivered from the dispensation of the law, and from a legal spirit, and of their being brought under the gospel dispensation, and cordially believing the gospel doctrine, in the same language "as one and

the same thing ;" and what he says is sometimes equally applicable to the outward dispensation and the inward temper denominated from it, and sometimes more pertinent to the one than to the other. So in my text, the time *before faith came*, is applicable to the state of the Galatians, while under the dispensation of the law, and under a legal or self-righteous temper ; and while they had neither heard the doctrine of faith, nor received the grace of faith. And when in opposition to this (v. 25) he observes, *after that faith is come, we are no longer under the law as a schoolmaster :* he means both after the preaching of the gospel, and after it was received by faith. Many more instances of this might be given ; particularly chap. iv. 3, 5. Rom. vii. 1, 7.

From hence we may infer, that what St. Paul says concerning the state of those that were under the law, as that *they are in bondage, shut up under sin, under the curse, that the law is their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ*, &c. is not to be confined to the Jews, or to persons in that age, but may in part, at least, be applied to us, though we have been educated under the gospel, and never were under the Jewish law ; for we may be possessed of a legal spirit, though we live under the gospel, and never were subject to the Mosaic economy. Our observation also supported from hence, that the apostle represents the Galatians (the main body of whom were Gentiles, and had no more connection with the law of Moses than we) as under the law, under the curse of the law, &c. in this sense ; and as freed from the law by their faith. Therefore, though the outward dispensation of faith came into our parts of the world before we were born, yet we may apply the text to ourselves and say, *before faith came ;* that is, before faith came into our hearts : before the evangelical grace was wrought in us by the power of God, *we were kept under the law ;* the original word is very emphatical,* we were prisoners under close confinement, we were held in custody by the law, as by a strong guard, to prevent all escape. *We were shut up to the faith.* Here again the original word is very emphatical,† we were enclosed all round ; every way of escape was stopt, but only that of faith : we were shut up to this way : in this way we were obliged to fly, or to continue forever bound fast under condemnation ; *shut up to the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* This also may be accommodated to us, and signify the clear discovery of the gospel to our minds, as an object of faith, by

* Εφρουρουμεθα. † Συγκεκλεισμενον.

that illumination of the Spirit, which is the cause of it. But it is more properly and peculiarly applicable to the Galatians, while as yet the doctrine of faith in the gospel was not revealed to them. They were held in custody by the law till that happy time came, and then, upon their believing the gospel, they were set at liberty.

My present design is to lay down some propositions for the explication of the apostolic doctrine concerning the law and the gospel, that you may see in what sense mankind are kept prisoners by the law, under condemnation, and shut up to the faith ; or to the method of justification, through the righteousness of Christ, as the only way of escape.

The propositions I would lay down are these :—That all mankind in all ages are under a law to God : That this law was first given to man, in a state of innocence, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he was to obtain happiness : That it has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications in different ages : That this law requires perfect, personal and perpetual obedience : That it is impossible for any of the sons of men to be justified and saved by this constitution : That therefore God has graciously made another constitution, namely, the gospel, by which sinners may be justified and saved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ : That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ : And consequently, that they are shut up by the law to this method of salvation, as the only way of escape.

I. " All mankind, in all ages, are under a law to God." This can be denied by none who grant there is such a thing as sin or duty ; for where there is no law, there can be no duty or transgression. If murder or blasphemy are universally evil with regard to all mankind, in all ages, it must be because they are forbidden by a law universally and perpetually binding. If the love of God, or justice towards men, be a duty binding upon all mankind, in all ages, it must be because it is enjoined by some law of universal and perpetual obligation. This cannot be disputed with regard to the Jews, the subjects of the Mosaic law, who are said, by way of eminence, to be under the law : And the apostle infers, that those who lived between Adam and Moses were also under a law, from the punishment of death inflicted upon them ; for as where there is no law there can be no transgression, so where there is no law, there can be no punishment ; for punish-

ment is the execution of the penalty of the law upon an offender, for transgressing the precept. Thus St. Paul reasons (Rom. v. 13, 14.) *until the law ;* that is, all the time from Adam's fall till the giving of the law at mount Sinai, (about 2536 years) *sin was in the world ;* and consequently there was a law then in force ; *for sin is not imputed where there is no law.* But sin was evidently imputed in that period ; for though the Sinai law was not then published, *nevertheless death*, the penalty of the law, *reigned with dreadful uncontrolled power, from Adam to Moses.* Thus you see the patriarchal age was under a law to God. And as to the Gentiles, though they had not the revealed law, yet they were not lawless, but bound by the law of nature : of the contents of which their own reason and conscience informed them in the most important particulars. Thus St. Paul tells us, *that the Gentiles who have not the revealed law*, perform by nature the part of a law,* and therefore *are a law to themselves, the works of the law being written in their hearts.* Rom. ii. 14, 15. As to us, who live under the gospel, *we are not*, as the apostle observes, *without law to God, but under the law to Christ ;* (1 Cor. ix. 21.) that is, we are still under a law to God, with all those endearing obligations superadded, which result from the gracious gospel of Christ. And we cannot suppose the contrary, without supposing that the gospel has put an end to all religion and morality, and set us at liberty to all manner of vice and impiety ; for if we are still obliged to religion and virtue, it must be by some constitution that has the general nature of a law. St. Paul rejects the thought with horror, that the law is made void by the gospel. *Do we then make void the law by faith ? Far be the thought, nay, we establish the law.* Rom. iii. 31. This first proposition therefore is sufficiently evident, " That all mankind, in all ages, and under every dispensation of religion, are under a law to God." Let us now advance a step farther :

II. This law was first of all given to man in a state of innocence, under the model of a covenant of works ; that is, it was the constitution, by obedience to which he was to secure the favour of God, and to obtain everlasting felicity. It was his duty to observe it with a view to obtain immortality and happiness by it ; and these blessings he was to secure by his own works of obedience. That the law was first published to man with this

* So I would choose to render φύσει τὰ τῆ νόμῳ ποιη ; and thus it agrees better with what follows, ἑαυτοῖς εἰσι νόμος.

view, is evident from many passages of scripture, particularly from that often repeated maxim of the apostle, *The man that doth these things shall live by them ;* (Rom. x. 5. Gal. vii. 12. see also Lev. xviii. 5. Neh. ix. 29. Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21.) nay, he tells us expressly *that the commandment was ordained unto life ;* (Rom. vii. 10.) that is, it was appointed as a plan by which man was to obtain life. Hence Christ assures the lawyer, who had repeated the substance of the law to him, *This do, and thou shalt live*, Luke x. 28. This implies, that if he fully obeyed the law, he would certainly obtain life by it, according to the original design of that constitution. And when St Paul says, That the salvation of sinners was a thing which the law could not do, in that it was *weak through the flesh*, Rom. vii. 3, it is implied, that it was not weak in itself, but fully sufficient to give life ; only, by the weakness of our flesh, we were not able to obey it, and on this account it was not able to save us. This proposition also is sufficiently evident, that the law was first given to man in innocence, as a covenant of works, or as a constitution according to which he was to obtain life by his own works. I now proceed to the next proposition, and to shew you,

III. That this law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications, adapted to the various circumstances of mankind, and the designs of Heaven towards them.

That you may more fully understand this, I would observe by the way, that the law is either moral or positive. By the moral law, I mean that law which is founded upon the eternal reason of things, and that enjoins those duties which creatures under such and such circumstances owe to God, and to one another, and which necessarily flow from their relation to one another. Thus, love to God, and justice to mankind, are moral duties universally binding upon mankind in all circumstances, whether in a state of innocence, or in a state of sin ; whether under the revealed law, or the law of nature. There can be no possible circumstances in which mankind are free from the obligation of such duties, and at liberty to commit the contrary sins. These are more properly the materials of a moral law. But there is another set of duties agreeable to the circumstances of fallen creatures under a dispensation of grace, which I may call evangelical morals ; I mean repentance and reformation, and the utmost solicitude to re-obtain the forfeited favour of our Maker. These are univer-

sally binding upon mankind in their present state, and result from their circumstances, and consequently partake of the general nature of a moral law. By a positive law, I mean a law not necessarily resulting from the reason of things, and our relations and circumstances, but founded upon the will of the lawgiver, and adapted to some particular occasion. Such was the appendage to the first covenant, "Thou shalt not eat of the tree of knowledge." Such were the institution of sacrifices immediately after the fall, the ordinance of circumcision given to Abraham, and the various ceremonies of the law of Moses; and such are baptism and the Lord's supper, and the institution of the first day of the week for the christian Sabbath under the gospel. These ordinances are not binding in their own nature, and consequently they are not of universal or perpetual obligation, but they are in force when and where the lawgiver is pleased to appoint. And the moral law, under every dispensation, has had some of these institutions annexed to it; though in the state of innocence, and under the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, they are but few and easy.

I now resume the proposition, "That the law has passed through several editions, and received several additions and modifications." With regard to Adam in his original state, it only required of him the duties naturally binding upon him, and adapted to his condition as an innocent creature, with this one positive precept added, that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge. This was its model while a covenant of works. But when man fell, it received several additions and modifications adapted to his circumstances, and subservient to the gospel, the new plan of life, which was immediately introduced, as I shall have occasion to observe more fully hereafter. Such was the early institution of sacrifices, to prefigure the grand atonement of Christ, which then took its rise, and thence spread through all nations, though they soon forgot its original design and evangelical reference. Thus the law continued for many hundreds of years, from Adam's fall to the deluge.* After the deluge it was given to Noah, with the institution of sacrifices continued, and the addition of some new laws, particularly the allowance of animal food, with the exception of blood. And it is this addition of the law that was most strictly universal with regard to all mankind, who were the

* About 1656 years. *Universal History*, Vol. xx. p. 2.

posterity of Noah, the second root of human nature, and who received it from him ; though it was soon forgotten, or adulterated with superstitions. After some time,* when the knowledge and worship of the true God was almost lost in the world, he was pleased to separate Abraham from the idolatrous world, to set up his church in his family, and to continue the former edition of the law, with the addition of the sacred rite of circumcision, as a token of initiation into the church, and of the purification of the heart, and as a seal of the righteousness of faith. And this constitution continued in the posterity of Abraham for about 430 years ; when it was new modelled and improved by a more full edition. A summary of the moral law was published with the utmost majesty and terror on Mount Sinai, and written by God himself on two tables of stone. But besides this moral law, and besides the positive institutions given to Adam, Noah, and Abraham, God was pleased to add a great variety of positive laws, concerning the manner of sacrificing, and the system of worship, concerning ceremonial pollutions, concerning the Jewish policy, or civil government of that people, and many other things : of all which we have a full account in the law of Moses.

This dispensation continued in force from that time for about 1525 years, till the ascension of Christ, and the day of Pentecost, when the more glorious dispensation of the gospel was introduced. It is often called the law, by way of eminence ; and it is to this most perfect dispensation of the law that the apostle particularly refers, when disproving the possibility of a sinner's justification by the law. And it was to his purpose to have this particularly in view : for if a sinner could not be justified by this edition of the law, which was the most complete, and that in which the Jews peculiarly gloried and trusted, it is evident that he cannot be justified by the law at all, under any form whatsoever. Now, though the gospel, or the covenant of grace, as I shall observe presently, was interwoven with this dispensation, as well as every other, and it was the great design of the law to be subservient to it, yet there was much of a covenant of works in this dispensation, and that in two respects. 1. In the dreadful majesty and terror of the publication from amidst the thunders and lightnings, and darkness of Sinai, which spread such a horror through the whole camp of Israel, and made even Moses confess, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* This had not the

* About 427 years, circumcision was instituted 451 years after the deluge.

aspect of friendship : it did not appear as if God was amicably conversing with an innocent people, and setting up a constitution of mere grace among them. It rather appeared like a dispensation of a provoked God towards a guilty people, intended to strike terror into their impenitent hearts, to make them sensible of his awful majesty and justice, of the terror of his law, and of their aggravated breaches of it. There were indeed gracious designs at the bottom of all this : but they were such designs as could not be accomplished, till sinners were made deeply sensible of their dreadful guilt, and the terrors of God and his holy law, which they had broken ; and therefore to accomplish them, God puts on all these dreadful forms of wrath. Thus the Sinai dispensation was intended to prepare men for the method of salvation through Christ, by making them sensible of their miserable condition by the breach of the covenant of works ; and hence it had so much of the terrible aspect of the covenant of works in its promulgation. This is one thing the apostle means, when he says, *the law worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15, that is, it is adapted to impress a sense of divine wrath upon the minds of the guilty. Hence he calls that dispensation, *the ministration of death and condemnation ;* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. that is, it had a tendency to excite a sense of death and condemnation ; and he makes Hagar, the bond-woman, an allegorical representation of this Sinai covenant, Gal iv. 24, 25, because it was calculated to excite in sinners a spirit of bondage, or to strike them with a sense of slavery, terror and condemnation. This view also clears up the meaning of several things which he says of the Jewish law, as that *it was added because of transgression ;* Gal. iii. 19. that is, it was annexed to the covenant of grace, because it was necessary that sinners should be made deeply sensible of their guilt and condemnation by the breach of the law, in order to their seeking salvation in the way of grace through Christ. And hence, says he, *the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ*, ver. 24. that is, the painful discipline and smarting rod of the law were necessary and conducive to constrain us to fly to Christ as the only Saviour, without whom we were shut up under irreversible condemnation. And again, Rom. v. 20, *the law entered, that the offence might abound ;* that is, that it might appear that the offence had abounded, and overspread the world ; and therefore, that they stood in the utmost need of a Saviour.

Thus you see the dispensation of the law at Sinai had the appearance of a broken covenant of works, and in this view was subservient to the gospel. But this was not all; for, 2. If we consider that covenant as the constitution of the Jewish church and state, and the model by which they were to govern themselves in the land of Canaan, it was properly a covenant of works As a visible national church and civil society, God would reward or punish them in temporal things, according to and for their works. While they continued obedient to the external forms and institutions of this law, they were to hold their possessions in the land of Canaan; and, when they publicly violated this covenant, they were cast out of their possessions, and brought into slavery. These temporal possessions they held upon the footing of a covenant of works; though such of them as were good men, were saved by a quite different constitution, even in the way of grace, and faith in Christ, as we are now, as I may have occasion to observe hereafter.

This remark will explain such places in the law and in the prophets, where we meet with such declarations as this, *If a man observe my statutes, he shall live in them;* of which you have more instances than one in the xviiith chapter of Ezekiel. They are said to be "just," &c. as members of the Jewish church and state, because they had observed the externals of that law, which was the constitution of their republic, and which in that view only required an external obedience, which it was in their power to yield; and therefore they were entitled to life and its blessings, in the land of Canaan, according to that constitution. Indeed God seems to have governed not only the Jews, but all the kingdoms of the earth, considering them as civil societies, very much in this manner, upon the footing of a covenant of works. Spiritual and immortal blessings are bestowed upon individuals in every age in a way of grace, without regard to their personal works; and the holiness necessary to the enjoyment of them, is not merely outward, but in the whole soul; and it is God only that can work in them. But nations, as such, are under a kind of covenant of works, the condition of which is an external observance of the laws of God, which is in their power, without any special assistance from him; and as they perform or break this condition, temporal rewards and punishments are distributed to them by divine Providence. This thought brings me in mind of thee, O Virginia! O my country! for if God deal with thee upon this

plan, how dreadful must be thy doom !—But to return. This suggests to us another reason why the apostle so often speaks of the Mosaic law as a covenant of works ; namely, because, considering it as the constitution of the Jewish republic in temporal respects, it was really such ; but it was never intended that the Jews should seek or obtain spiritual or immortal blessings by it under this notion. I have been so much longer than I expected on this proposition, that I must be the shorter on those that follow. The next proposition is,

IV. That the law of God requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience. This holds true with regard to every law of God, whatever it be. If it requires purely moral duties, it requires that they be performed exactly according to its prescriptions. If it requires evangelical duties, as repentance or sincerity, it requires perfect repentance, perfect sincerity. If it requires the observance of any ceremonial or sacramental institutions, as sacrifice, circumcision, baptism, or the Lord's supper, it requires a perfect observance of them. Men have got the notion into their heads of a divine law that does not require perfect obedience, or that makes allowance for imperfection. But this is bad sense, as well as bad divinity. It is the greatest absurdity imaginable ; for to say that a law does not require perfect obedience, is the same thing as to say that it does not require what it does require : to do all that the law requires is perfect obedience ; and since it requires us to do all that it does require, it certainly does require perfect obedience ; and if it does not require perfect obedience, it does not require all that it does require : which is a direct contradiction. In short, it is plain to common sense, that there never was, nor never can be, any law, moral or positive, divine or human, that does not require perfect, absolute obedience. Farther, Is not every sin forbidden ? is not every duty enjoined ? Undoubtedly it is : You are not at liberty to commit one sin, or to omit one duty, not even the least. Indeed the very notion of sin and duty, supposes a law forbidding the one, and enjoining the other ; and they are just commensurate with the prohibitions and injunctions of the law.—This is also the voice of scripture. That perfect obedience is required, appears from the dreadful curse denounced upon every transgressor for the least offence : *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.* Gal. iii. 10. Not some subjects, but every one, of every rank and character, must not only resolve or

endeavour, but must do, not some things, or many things, but all things, written in the law ; not for a time, or for the most part, but he must always continue to do them. And if he fail in one thing, in one moment of his existence, the penalty of the law is in full force against him, and he falls under the curse. His obedience must be universal, perpetual and uninterrupted. There is the same reason for his obeying all in all things, and at all times, as for his obeying in any thing, or at any time. And all this obedience the law requires of him in his own person : the law allows of no imputation of the righteousness of another ; no obedience by proxy or substitute ; it is the covenant of grace alone that allows of this, and the law must be so far dispensed with in order to make room for such a constitution.

This, my brethren, is the nature of the law, of every law that God ever made, under every dispensation of religion, before the fall, and after the fall, before the law of Moses, under it, and under the gospel. In all ages, in all circumstances, and from all persons it requires perfect, perpetual, and personal obedience : to the performance of this, it promises eternal life : but the sinner, by every the least failure, falls under its dreadful curse, and is cut off from all the promised blessings. And hence it most evidently follows,

V. That it is absolutely impossible for any of the fallen sons of men to be justified and saved by the constitution of the law. Take what dispensation of the law you please, the law of innocence, the law of Moses, or the moral part of the gospel, it is impossible for one of the fallen posterity of Adam to be saved by it in any of these views ; and the reason is plain, there is not one of them but what has broken it : there is not one of them that has yielded perfect obedience to it ; and, therefore, there is not one of them but what is condemned by it, to suffer its dreadful penalty. This is so extremely plain from what has been said, that I need not insist upon the proof of it. I shall only subjoin the repeated declaration of the apostle, that *by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified.* Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. And that *as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.* Gal. iii. 10. Come, *ye that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law ?* Gal. iv. 2. Hark ! how the thunders of Sinai roar against you as guilty sinners. Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law ? that you have never committed one sin, or neglected one duty ? Alas ! you must

hang down the head, and cry, guilty, guilty ; for in many things you have all offended. Then, be it known unto you, there is no life by the law for you. Set about obedience with ever so much earnestness ; repent, till you shed rivers of tears ; fast, till you have reduced yourselves to skeletons ; alas ! all this will not do, if you expect life by your own obedience to the law ; for all this is not that perfect obedience which it absolutely requires of all the sons of men ; and whatever is short of this is nothing, and leaves you under its curse. You may make excuses to men, and to your own consciences, but the law will admit of none. Perfect obedience ! perfect obedience ! is its eternal cry ; and till you can produce that, it condemns you to everlasting misery ; and all your cries, and tears, and reformation, are to no purpose. Thus you are held in close custody by the law ; you are shut up under condemnation by it. And is there no way of escape ? No ; there is no possible way of escape—but one ; and that shall be the matter of the next proposition.

VI. That God has made another constitution, namely, the gospel, or the covenant of grace, by which even guilty sinners, condemned by the law, may be justified and saved by faith, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

According to this constitution there is encouragement for sinners to repent, and use the means of grace ; and all who are saved by it, are not only obliged to yield obedience to the law, but also enabled to do so with sincerity, though not to perfection. They are effectually taught by it *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in the world ;* and in short, holiness of heart and life is as effectually secured in this way as in any other. But then, here lies the difference ; that all our obedience to the law, all our endeavours, all our repentance, prayers, and reformation ; in short, all our good works, all our virtues and graces are not at all the ground of our justification ; they do not, in whole or in part, more or less, constitute our justifying righteousness ; so that in justification we are considered as guilty, law-condemned sinners, entirely destitute of all personal righteousness ; and we are pardoned and accepted, only and entirely upon account of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, imputed to us, and accepted of God for us, as though it were our own. I say, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, or his yielding the most perfect obedience to the precept of the law and suffering its dreadful penalty for us, or in our stead, is the only ground of

our justification. This is a righteousness as perfect as the law of God requires. And consequently the law is not repealed when we are justified in this way; it is still in full force; and all its demands are answered by this righteousness, which is equal to the severest requisitions of the covenant of works; only it is dispensed with in one particular; namely, that whereas the law properly requires personal obedience from every man for himself, now it accepts of the obedience of Christ as a surety in our stead, and is satisfied by his righteousness imputed to us, as though it were originally our own. But how do we obtain an interest in this righteousness? I answer, it is only obtained by a vigorous pursuit, and in the earnest use of the means of grace; but then all these endeavours of ours do not in the least entitle us to it, or it is not at all bestowed upon us on account of these endeavours; but the grand pre-requisite, and that which has a peculiar concurrence in obtaining it, is an humble faith; that is, when a sinner, deeply sensible of his guilt, of his condemnation by the law, and of his own utter inability to do any thing at all for his own justification; I say, when such an humble sinner, despairing of relief from himself, renounces all his own righteousness, and trusts only and entirely in the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, when he places all his dependance upon his righteousness only, and most earnestly desires that God would deal with him entirely upon that footing, then he believes; and then, and thus, this righteousness is made over to him, and accepted for him, and God no more views him as a law condemned sinner, but as one that has a righteousness equal to all the demands of the law, and therefore he deals with him accordingly: he pronounces him just, and gives him a title to life and every blessing, as though he deserved it upon his own account, or had a claim to it upon the footing of his own obedience to the covenant of works.

My brethren, I am bold to pronounce this the gospel-method of salvation; and, whatever scepticism and uncertainty I feel about many other things, I have not the least scruple to venture my soul, with all its guilt, and with all its immortal interest, upon this plan. If I have thoroughly searched the scriptures for myself in any one point, it is in this. And could I but lay before you all the evidence which has occurred to me in the search, I cannot but persuade myself it would be fully satisfactory to you all; but at present I can only point out to you a few passages. Acts xiii. 39. *By Jesus Christ*, says St. Paul, *all that believe are justified*

from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, which was the most complete dispensation of the law. Rom iii. 21—28. *Now the righteousness of God without the law* (that is, the righteousness which does not at all consist in the works of the law, but is quite a different thing from it *) *is manifested—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ.* This you see is the way in which it comes *unto all and upon all them that believe ; for there is no difference* of Jew or Gentile here : all *being freely justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ.* Therefore we conclude, that *a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law :* so Rom. iv. *To him that worketh*, and on that account is considered as righteous, *the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt :* he is not at all dealt with in the gospel-method, which is entirely a plan of grace, (ver. 4.) *but to him that worketh not*, with a view to his justification, and is not considered as entitled to it upon the account of his works, *but believeth*, humbly trusteth and dependeth *upon him that justifieth the ungodly*, upon him who considers the sinner, whatever previous endeavours he may have used, as ungodly, and destitute of all personal righteousness, to such an humble believer, *his faith is counted for righteousness.* (ver. 5.) *Even as David describeth the blessedness of that man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works*, &c. (ver. 6.) Gal. ii. 15. *We*, says St. Paul, *who are Jews by nature*, (and therefore stand most fair for justification by the law, if it were possible) *and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*, (ver. 16.) These, my brethren, are but specimens of the many plain and express scriptures that support this doctrine ; and I think it plain, upon the whole, that if we can understand any thing contained in that sacred book, we may safely conclude that this truth is contained in it.

Here I would hint, what I intended to enlarge upon, had the time allowed, that this is the only way in which any of the sons of Adam have been saved since the fall ; and that this gracious scheme has run through all the dispensations of religion from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ ; and that now, by the gospel, it is more fully and illustriously revealed, the object of a more distinct, particular, and

* χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσυνη.

explicit faith. Rom. i. 17. It was first published immediately after the first breach of the covenant of works, in that gracious promise, *The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. It was communicated to Abraham in that promise, *In thy seed*; that is, as St. Paul teaches us to understand it, *in Christ*, who shall spring from thee according to the flesh, *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* Gen. xxii. 18. Gal. iii. 16. Hence St. Paul tells us, that the scripture, *foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.* Gal. iii. 8. This was, as it were, the substratum of all the ceremonies and institutions of the law of Moses; and as was observed, the whole of this law, and the solemn and dreadful manner of its publication, were intended to subserve this scheme, by making men more sensible of their need of it, and constraining them to fly to it for refuge. The prophets also received this evangelical light, and continued to diffuse it around them, till the Sun of Righteousness arose; but all these discoveries were but dark, when compared to the clearer revelation we have of it in the New Testament, particularly in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, which designedly treat upon it. However, they that lived under former dispensations, had light enough to direct them to place their trust in the mercy of God, and to look out with eager eyes for the Messiah, through whom alone they were justified, though they might not have distinct ideas of the way. Hence Abraham and David are mentioned by St. Paul as instances of the gospel-method of justification by faith in Christ. Rom. iv. 1—7. I now proceed to another proposition.

VII. That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forsake it, and fly to the gospel for refuge by faith in Christ.

There are but two constitutions that God has set up in our world, by which mankind can obtain life, namely, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the law and gospel; and all mankind are under the one, or the other. They are all either under the constitution which demands perfect obedience as the only title to life, and threatens death, eternal death, to the least failure; or under that which does indeed both require and enable them to yield sincere obedience, but does not insist upon our obedience at all as the ground of our acceptance and justification, but confers that honour entirely upon the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by the humble faith of a guilty, self-con-

demned, helpless, broken-hearted sinner. We are all of us, my brethren, under one or other of these constitutions : for to be from under both of them is the same thing as to be lawless, and to be under no plan of life at all. Now, we are under the law while we are under the government of a legal spirit ; and we cannot be freed from it till we are brought off from all dependance upon the law, and constrained to choose the gospel-method of salvation as helpless, law-condemned sinners, by our own personal act. We live under the gospel dispensation indeed, and were never under the law of Moses : and yet we may be under the law notwithstanding, as the Romans and Galatians were till they were set free by faith, though they had been heathens, and were never under the Mosaic dispensation. An outward dispensation is not the thing that makes the difference in this case. Many who lived under the dispensation of the law had an evangelical spirit, or faith in Christ, and therefore they were upon the gospel-plan, and obtained salvation in the way of grace. And multitudes that live in the New Testament age, under the gospel administration of the covenant of grace, and who profess the christian religion, and were never subject to the law of Moses, are under the influence of a legal, self righteous spirit, and therefore are not under grace, but under the law as a covenant of works : upon this footing they stand before God, and they can enter no claim to life upon any other plan. As for the righteousness of Christ, and the grace of the gospel, they have nothing to do with it, because they have not chosen it, and made it theirs by their own personal act.

And would you know whether you are set free from the law, and placed under the covenant of grace ? St. Paul, who knew it, both by his own experience, and by inspiration from heaven, will inform you, (1.) You have been made deeply sensible of sin and condemnation by the law. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* Rom. iii. 20. I had not known sin *but by the law*, says St. Paul, personating a convinced sinner under the law, *without the law*, Rom. viii. 7. that is, while I was ignorant of the extent and spirituality of the law, *sin was dead*, as to my sense and apprehension of it ; *but when the commandment came*, with power and conviction to my conscience, *sin revived, and I died ;* that is, I saw sin to be alive in me, and myself to be dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and condemned to death by the law, verse 9. ; *the law also worketh wrath ;* that is, a sense of the wrath of God, and the dreadful punishment of sin ; Rom. iv. 14. And has the law ever

had these effects upon you, my brethren? Have you ever had such a conviction of sin and condemnation by it? If not, you are still under it. (2.) If you have been delivered from the law, you have been cut off from all hopes of obtaining justification by your own obedience to it; you have given up this point as altogether desperate; or in the strong language of the apostle, you have been slain by the law. *When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.* Rom. viii. 9. *My brethren*, says the apostle to the christians at Rome, *ye are become dead to the law*, verse 4, that is, ye are become dead to all endeavours, all hopes and desires of justification by the works of the law; you see nothing but death for you in that constitution. And he tells you how this death was brought about; *I through the law am dead to the law*, Gal. ii. 19. that is, the law itself became the executioner of all my hopes of life by it, and forever put an end to all my endeavours to seek justification in that way: it was a view of the extensive demands of the law that discovered to me my own inability to comply with them, and so deadened me entirely to all expectations of life by my obedience to it.

And have you ever, my brethren, been thus slain by the law to the law? Have you ever been made sensible of the absolute impossibility of working out a justifying righteousness for yourselves by your own endeavours, and thereupon given up the point, as hopeless and desperate? If not, you are still under the law, and your hearts eagerly cling to it, and will not be divorced from it. Here you will hold and hang, till you drop into the bottomless pit, unless God deliver you from this legal spirit.

(3.) If you have been set at liberty from the law, and brought under the covenant of grace, you have believed in Christ, and fled to the gospel, as the only way of escape from the bondage and condemnation of the law. It is the uniform doctrine of the apostle, that it is by faith only that this happy change is brought about in our condition. *We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* Gal. ii. 16. But after faith is come, we are set at liberty, and no longer under the law, *as a schoolmaster*, Gal. iv. 25. *Righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we believe in him that raiseth up our Lord Jesus from the dead.* Rom. iv. 24. Faith, you see, is the turning point. And so it is represented by Christ himself. *He that believeth in him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already*, John iii. 18; he has sinned, and therefore the sentence of condemnation is already passed upon him by

the law. And have you, my brethren, ever been brought thus to believe? Have you found yourselves shut up to the faith, as the only way of escape? and have you fled to the mercy of God in Christ in that way, with all the vigour of your souls?

(4.) If you are under the covenant of grace, then you are not willing slaves to sin, but make it your great business to live to God. This is represented as the privilege and constant endeavour of all that are delivered from the law. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law*, which requires obedience, but furnishes no strength to perform it, *but under grace*, which will enable you to resist sin, and live to God. Rom. vi. 14. *Ye are dead to the law, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that you might bring forth fruit unto God:* This is the great design of your divorce from the law, and your marriage to Christ, Rom. vii. 4. *I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Gal. ii. 19. And do you thus live to God, sirs? Is this the great business, and constant endeavour of your whole life? If not, you are not under grace, but under the law, the Egyptian task-master, who demands perfect obedience, but gives no ability to perform it; and now, you that are under the law, take a serious view of your condition. *They that are of faith are blessed*, Gal. vi. 9. but faith has never entered your hearts, and therefore you have nothing to do with the blessing. But you may read your doom in the next verse: *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse*, (verse 10.) for, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* Thus you lie under the ministration of death and condemnation, and you can never get free from its curse till you can perform impossibilities; till you can annihilate all your past sins, till you can transform your sinful life into an uninterrupted course of perfect obedience. Do this, and you shall live, even according to that constitution under which you are. But till you can do this, till you can yield perfect, perpetual obedience, in your own persons, you can never get free from the curse, or obtain life, while you affect this way of justification. I tell you again, all your prayers and tears, all your repentance and reformation; in short, every thing that comes short of perfect obedience, will avail you nothing at all upon this constitution: they are but fig-leaves that cannot hide your nakedness. And do not imagine that the righteousness of Christ will supply your defects, and procure you acceptance; for his righteousness belongs only to the covenant of

grace, and is imputed only to such as have received it by faith; but, while you are under the law, you have nothing to do with it. St. Paul himself will tell you, *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you would be justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace*, Gal. v. 4.; you stand entirely on your own bottom; and God will deal with you just as he finds you in yourselves, without any relation to Christ at all.

And now, my dear brethren, do you now begin to find yourselves pinched closely, and in a sore strait? Do you not feel yourselves imprisoned and shut up under the law? And are not you casting about, and looking out for some way of escape? Well, I will shew you the only way left, and that is by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The gospel! the gospel! O that my voice could publish the joyful sound in every corner of this globe inhabited by guilty sinners! The gospel of grace is the only relief for you. Fly thither, ye helpless, law-condemned, self-condemned sinners; fly thither, and you are safe. As depraved and guilty, as ungodly and destitute of all righteousness, accept of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Cast all your dependance upon it, and make it the only ground of all your hopes. Regard the law always as a rule of life, and labour to form your practice upon that sacred model: but as a covenant of works, by which you should obtain life, fly from it, abandon it, give up all your hopes and expectations from it: and betake yourselves to the covenant of grace, of pure, free, unmingled grace, without the least ingredient of merit. In this way, I offer you pardon, justification, and eternal salvation; and such of you as have chosen this way may be assured of these blessings, notwithstanding all your sins and imperfections. O! that this representation of your condition may recommend Jesus Christ and his righteousness to you! O! that it may effectually draw off sinners from all their vain, self-righteous schemes, which, like cobwebs, they would form out of their own bowels, and constrain them to stoop and submit to the righteousness of God, and the method of grace! If, after all, they refuse, they will leave this house condemned and under the curse. But such of you as comply, like the penitent publican, you will return to your own house justified, however guilty you came here this morning. I shall conclude with a stanza or two from that evangelical writer, Dr. Watts:

Go, ye that rest upon the law,
And toil, and seek salvation there;
Look to the flames that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair:

But I'll retire beneath the cross:
Jesus, at thy dear feet I lie;
And the keen sword that justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.

Sermon 55.

THE GOSPEL INVITATION.

A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.

LUKE XIV. 21—24. *Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper.*

SO vast and various are the blessings proposed to our acceptance in the gospel, that they can never be fully represented, though the utmost force of language be exhausted for that purpose in the sacred writings. Among other lively images, this is one in my context, where the gospel is compared to a feast, a marriage-feast of royal magnificence. The propriety and significancy of this representation are obvious at first sight; for what is more rich and elegant, and what more agreeable to mankind, than such an entertainment!

Though it is my principal design to consider this parable in its general secondary sense, as applicable to the evangelized world, yet I shall hint a few words upon its particular primary sense, as immediately applicable to the Jews at the time it was spoken.

Jesus was ready to improve every occurrence for profitable conversation; and when one of the guests made this remark, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, or in the reign of the Messiah; he takes occasion to let him and the rest of the company know, that the kingdom of God under the Messiah would not be so acceptable to the world, particularly to the Jews, as might be expected; but that they would generally reject it, though they pretended so eagerly to expect and desire it.

He said unto him, A certain man made a great supper; that is, the great God has made rich provisions through Jesus Christ of

all blessings necessary for the complete salvation and happiness of a guilty world : *and he bade many ;* that is, he invited the whole nation of the Jews to a participation of these blessings, when they should be revealed ; invited them beforehand, by Moses and the prophets, and by John the Baptist. *And he sent his servant at supper time ;* that is, he sent Christ and his apostles, when the gospel dispensation was introduced, and those blessings fully revealed, *to say to them that were bidden*, that is, to the Jews, who had been invited by his former messengers ; alluding to the custom of those times, when, besides the general invitation to nuptial entertainments given some time before, it was usual to send a particular invitation when the feast was ready, and the attendance of the guests was immediately expected ; *Come, for all things are now ready.* Embrace the long expected Messiah, who has now made his appearance among you, and accept the blessings he offers you now, when they are fully revealed.—*But they all, with one consent, began to make excuse ;* that is, the Jews in general rejected the Messiah, and the blessings he proposed to their acceptance. The true reason was, their natural aversion to one who taught so holy a religion, and proposed only a spiritual deliverance. But they cover over their conduct with plausible excuses ; as if the guests, invited to a banquet, should say, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it* : or, *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them* : or, *I have married a wife, and cannot come ; therefore pray excuse me.* These excuses, you see, are all drawn from the affairs of life ; which perhaps was intended to intimate, that the pleasures and cares of this world are the reason why the Jews and sinners in all ages reject the invitations of the gospel. It is also observable, that the excuses here made are very trifling and not plausible. What necessity for viewing a piece of ground, or proving oxen, after the purchase ? That ought to have been done before the purchase. Could a man's being newly married be a reason against his going with his bride to a place of feasting and pleasure ? No ; these excuses are silly and impertinent ; and Christ may have represented them in this light, on purpose to intimate, that all the objections and excuses which sinners plead for their non-compliance with the gospel, are trifling, and not so much as plausible.

Then the master of the house being angry ; that is, " the great God resenting the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and determining to reject them for it, said to his servant ;" that is, gave the

commission to his apostles, *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city*, where beggars sit to ask charity, *and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Perhaps this may refer to the sending of the gospel to the Jews that were dispersed in heathen countries and their proselytes, when their countrymen in the Holy Land had rejected it. They were not in the highways and hedges, like the poor Gentiles, nor yet settled in the houses in Jerusalem, but are very properly represented as beggars in the streets and alleys of the city; not in such abandoned circumstances as the Gentiles, nor yet so advantageously situated as the Jews in their own land, under the immediate ministry of the apostles. The first invitation is represented as given to persons of fashion, to intimate the superior advantages of the Jews resident in Judea, to whom the gospel was first preached. And those dispersed among the Gentiles are represented as lying in the streets and lanes, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind beggars, to signify their miserable condition in common with all mankind, without the blessings of the gospel; and their disadvantageous situation, compared with the Jews in and about Jerusalem. Or perhaps sending the invitation to those poor creatures, when they first had rejected it, may signify the first preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, upon the Jews rejecting it. And then the servant being ordered to go out again, not into the streets and lanes of the city, as before, but into the highways and hedges, may signify the farther preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, who were far off from the church, the city of God, and like poor country-beggars, lying as outcasts upon the public roads. But if we understand the former passage in the first sense, as signifying the publication of the gospel to the Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, and to their proselytes, then this second mission of the servant must signify the sending of the gospel for the first time to the Gentiles, after both the Jews resident in their own country, and those scattered in other nations had rejected it. The parable concludes with a terrible denunciation against those who had refused the invitation: *None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper:* That is, "The infidel Jews, though first invited, shall never enjoy the blessings of the gospel; but my church shall be furnished with members from among the poor outcast heathens, rather than such should continue in it."

These things must suffice to shew you the primary meaning of this parable, as applicable to the Jews of that age; and the re-

ception of the Gentiles into the church in their stead. But I intend to consider it in a more extensive sense, as applicable to us in these latter times.

Before I enter upon the consideration of this passage, it is necessary I should clear up an inquiry or two, which may reflect light upon the whole.

What are those blessings of the gospel which are here represented by a marriage-feast? And, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to such a feast?

These blessings, here represented by a marriage-feast, are infinitely rich and numerous. Pardon of sin; a free and full pardon for thousands, millions of the most aggravated sins: the influences of the Holy Spirit to sanctify our depraved natures, to subdue our sins, and implant and cherish in our hearts every grace and virtue; freedom from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and favourable access to the blessed God, and sweet communion with him, through Jesus Christ, even in this world: the reviving communications of divine love, to sweeten the affections of life; and the constant assistance of divine grace to bear us up under every burden, and to enable us to persevere in the midst of many temptations to apostasy; deliverance from hell, and all the consequences of sin; and a title to heaven, and all its inconceivable joys: in short, complete salvation in due time, and everlasting happiness, equal to the largest capacities of our nature.—This is a short view of the blessings of the gospel. But the riches of Christ are unsearchable; and human language can never represent them fully to view. But from the little that we know of them, do they not appear perfectly suited to our necessities; and such as we would ask of God, should he give us leave to ask what we please?

These blessings are represented to us in a striking and sensible manner in the Lord's Supper; and hence you see with what propriety it is called a feast. It is a rich entertainment for hungry souls; and the blessings which it signifies, and the conveyance of which it seals to believers, satisfy the most eager desires, and fully support and cherish the spiritual life. This, indeed, is not the feast primarily intended in this parable; for the Lord's Supper was not instituted when this parable was spoken; yet most of the things contained in it may very properly be accommodated to this ordinance.

You see the feast to which we are invited, namely, the rich blessings of the gospel. And now let us inquire, What is meant by the duty here represented by a compliance with an invitation to a marriage-feast ?

It supposes a deep affecting sense of our want of these blessings, and of our perishing condition without them : It supposes eager desires after them, and vigorous endeavours to obtain them : It supposes a willingness to abandon every thing inconsistent with them ; and it implies a cordial willingness to accept of them as they were offered ; for to pretend to be willing to receive them, and yet refuse the terms upon which they are offered, is the greatest absurdity. And how are they offered ? They are offered freely ; and therefore freely we must receive them, if we receive them at all — We must not offer our own imaginary merit to purchase them ; but take them as free gifts to us, purchased entirely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. They are offered conjunctly ; that is, in an inseparable conjunction with one another. Pardon and sanctifying grace, holiness and happiness, deliverance from the power, the pleasures, and the profits of sin, as well as from hell and the punishments of sin, the cross and the crown, self-denial and the most noble self-possession, are proposed to our choice in conjunction, and they cannot be separated ; and, therefore, in conjunction we must receive them, or not at all : we must receive them all or none. To accept the pardon, and reject sanctifying grace ; to accept the rewards, and refuse the work of holiness ; to accept deliverance from the punishment of sin, and yet refuse deliverance from sin itself, as though it were a painful confinement, or bereavement ; to accept of Christ as our Saviour, and reject him as our Ruler ; this is the wildest absurdity, and an absolute impossibility. To pretend to accept God's offer, and in the mean time to make our own terms, is to insult and mock him. What God and the nature of things have joined, let not man put asunder.

Hence you may see, that the duty represented by complying with an invitation to a marriage feast, in this parable, implies our embracing the gospel as true, which is opposed to the unbelief of the Jews ; our accepting the blessings of the gospel freely, as the gracious gift of God for the sake of Christ, renouncing all our own imaginary merit ; and our voluntary dedication of ourselves to the service of God, or consenting to be holy in heart and in all manner of conversation. Whoever complies with the

invitations to the gospel in this manner, shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb at the consummation of all things, and be happy forever.

Now, I hope you will know what I mean, when, in the progress of this discourse, I shall exhort you, in the language of my text, to come to this feast, or to comply with the invitation; I mean, that you should freely and heartily accept of the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered to you by the blessed God, who alone has a right to appoint the terms.

After these preliminaries, I proceed to the immediate consideration of my text.

The first thing that occurs, is a lively representation of the wretched state of mankind, previous to their being enriched with the blessings of the gospel. They are *poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind*, lying as beggars and outcasts in the streets and lanes of the city, and by the highways and hedges in the country. What can represent a more pitiable condition, with regard to this world! To be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in a palace, in the midst of all the necessaries and comforts of life, is a most melancholy situation; but to be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in the streets and lanes, or scattered about in the highways and hedges, as forlorn outcasts, without any covering but the inclement sky, without any bed but the cold ground, without any sustenance but the charity of passengers; this is the most melancholy situation that can be imagined: and this is the situation in which all mankind are represented, with regard to the eternal world, by one that perfectly knew their case, and who could not but give the most impartial account of it. This is your condition, my brethren, till you accept the rich blessings of the gospel. You are poor, poor as the most helpless beggar on the highway; destitute of pardon; destitute of all real goodness in the sight of God, whatever splendid appearance of virtue you may have in the sight of men; destitute of all qualifications for heaven, as well as of a title to it; destitute of all happiness suited to the spiritual nature, immortal duration, and large capacities of your souls: destitute of the favour of God, which is better than life, and without which life itself will be a curse; destitute of an interest in the righteousness and intercession of Christ the only Saviour of sinners; destitute of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make you truly holy. And what a poor destitute condition is this! You are maimed and defective, in a moral sense;

defective in those graces and virtues which are essential members of the new man. Your souls are incomplete, unfinished things. Your understandings without divine knowledge; your wills without a divine bias towards God and holiness; your affections without a proper tendency towards suitable objects; and these are as monstrous defects in a moral sense, as a body without limbs, or a head without eyes in a natural sense. You are halt or lame; without power of spiritual motion, or tendency towards it; without strength or inclination to walk in the ways of God's commandments. You are blind as to spiritual and eternal things; that is, ignorant of the glory of God, and the excellency of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him; ignorant of the evil and deformity of sin; and blind to the beauties of holiness. You may indeed have fine speculative notions about these things; but your notions are faint and unaffecting, and have no proper influence upon your heart and practice, and therefore as to all the useful and practical purposes of knowledge, you are stupidly blind and ignorant. O! what an affecting, miserable situation is this! and what renders it still the worse, is, that you are not sensible of it. The poor, blind, impotent beggar in the streets, or on the high road, is sensible of his condition, longs for deliverance, and begs and cries for relief from day to day. But alas! you are *rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*, in your own imagination; when you are *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* And hence you are so far from crying importunately for relief, like blind Bartimeus by the wayside, *Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!* that you will not accept relief when it is freely offered to you.

And are not you very unlikely guests to furnish out a nuptial feast? May not the great God justly leave you out in the invitation of the gospel, and refuse you the offer of its invaluable blessings? But O! the astonishing condescension and grace! to you is the word of salvation sent. Hear the commission first given to the apostles, and still continued to ministers of the gospel of a lower rank, *Go out—go out quickly*, the case is too dangerous to admit of delay. Without immediate provision the poor outcasts will perish, therefore make haste to find them out wherever they lie, and think it no hardship or indignity to you to go to the meanest places in quest of them. Go through the streets and alleys of the city, and search the hedges and highways in the country; *and bring them in;* urge them to come; insist

upon their compliance ; take no denial. Bring them in hither—hither, into the arms of my favour ;—hither, into my church, the grand apartment appointed for the celebration of this magnificent entertainment ;—hither, into the society of the most honourable guests, and into a participation of the richest blessings. Bring them in hither, poor, and blind, and lame, and halt, and maimed, as they are. They are all welcome. *Him that cometh unto me*, though clothed in rags, and destitute of all things, *I will in no wise cast out.*

To discharge this benevolent commission, I appear among you this day ; and shall I find none among you that will comply with the invitation ? Where are the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind ? In quest of you I am sent ; and I am ordered to bring you in. And will ye refuse ? Come, ye poor ! accept the unsearchable riches of Christ. Come, ye blind ! admit the healing light of the Sun of Righteousness. Ye halt and maimed ! submit yourselves to him, who, as a Physician, can heal what is disordered, and as a Creator, can add what is wanting, Come, ye hungry, starving souls ! come to this feast of fat things : that is, (to speak without a metaphor) accept the blessings of the gospel now freely offered to you. *Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and him that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.* Will ye rather sit still in the streets and hedges, than be guests at this divine feast ? Will ye refuse the invitation, when without these blessings you must famish forever ?

However, if ye refuse, I hope I shall be able to make my report to my Master, like the servant in my text ; *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.* " Lord, I have published thy gracious invitations, and persuaded them, in the best manner I could, to come in ; and if they still refuse, themselves must be accountable for it, and bear the consequence."

But I must indulge the pleasing hope, that some of you will this day accept this gracious invitation ; and such of you may be sure you shall be admitted. Nay, if all this assembly should unanimously consent, they would find the blessings of the gospel more than sufficient to supply all their wants. For after the servant had brought in a numerous company of guests from the streets and lanes, he tells his Lord, *yet there is room ;* there is room for many more guests. There are many seats still vacant ; the room is large, and will contain many more ; and the pro-

vision is sufficient, more than sufficient, for thousands, for millions more. Yes, my dear brethren, be not discouraged from coming, as if there was no room left for you. The virtue of that blood which streamed upon mount Calvary about 1700 years ago, which has washed away many millions of sins, from the fall of Adam to this day, through the space of near 6000 years; I say the virtue of that blood is still as powerful and sufficient as ever; as powerful and sufficient as when it first flowed warm from the wounded veins of the blessed Jesus.

The mercy of God endureth forever. It is an inexhaustible ocean, sufficient to overwhelm and drown a world of the most mountainous sins, and supply the most numerous and desperate necessities. The church of Christ is sufficiently large for the reception of all the inhabitants of the earth, and it is a growing structure, which never will be complete, till all nations are incorporated in it as living stones. In heaven are many mansions, prepared for the reception of many guests to the marriage-supper of the Lamb: and many of them are as yet empty; and may they be filled up by multitudes from this place! There, I hope, are seats provided for some of you, who are now *strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise.* I do not mean that you can be admitted there in your present condition: neither you nor I have any reason to hope for this; but I hope that divine grace may yet prepare you for those mansions of purity and glory. This hope gives a new spring to my endeavours, and therefore I invite the worst of you, the most impenitent and audacious, the most profligate and debauched among you, to come in. Come, O my guilty brethren! Come, publicans and sinners, drunkards, harlots, and thieves; come, sinners of the vilest characters, *repent and believe the gospel*, you shall be admitted to this celestial feast. O! must it not break the heart of the hardiest sinner among you, to hear, that, after all your aggravated and long-continued provocations, and notwithstanding your enormous guilt, that great God whom you have offended, though he stands in no need of you, and might easily glorify himself by inflicting righteous punishment upon you, yet is ready to wash away all your sins in the blood of his own Son, and to bestow upon you all the immortal blessings of his favour? O! is there a heart among you proof against such a melting consideration as this? Then all the principles of generosity and gratitude are lost and extinct within you!

I proclaim to all in this assembly this day, *all things are now ready; come unto the marriage.* And why should you not all comply? why should any of you exclude yourselves? Let every one resolve for himself, "for my part, I will not make myself that shocking exception." How do you know but this resolution is now forming in the person that sits or stands next to you? And shall you be left behind? Will you, as it were, shut the door of heaven against yourselves with your own hand? I once more assure you, there is yet room, room for you all. There are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the patriarchs, and *yet there is room.* There are many from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and *yet there is room.* There are persecuting Manasseh and Paul; there are Mary Magdalene, the demoniac, and Zaccheus, the publican, and *yet there is room.* There is the once incestuous and excommunicated, but afterwards penitent Corinthian; nay, there are several of the Corinthians, who, as St. Paul tells us, were once fornicators, idolaters, effeminate, Sodomites, covetous, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, yet there they now are, *washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God:* and there may you also be, though vile as they, if, with them, you come in at the call of the gospel: for *yet there is room.* There is, says St. John, Rev. vii. 9. a *great multitude, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation*; multitudes from Europe, Asia, Africa and America; and *yet there is room.* There is room for you, poor negroes! and for you, I hope, some vacant seats in heaven are reserved. Therefore, *I turn to the Gentiles; for to you also is the word of this salvation sent.* You may, with peculiar propriety, be represented by the poor, the blind, the halt, and maimed, in the highways and hedges. To you therefore I am sent with the offer of all the rich blessings of the gospel: and let me tell you, you are in extreme need of them, whether you feel your want or not: you need them more than liberty, than food, than health, than life itself; and without them you must perish forever. Come then, let this feast be adorned with your sable countenances, and furnished with guests from the savage wilds of Africa. Do not mistake me, as if I was just now inviting you to sit down at the Lord's table: alas! many have sat there, who are now banished forever from that Saviour, whom they professed to commemorate; and shut up in the prison of hell. But I am inviting you

to accept of the blessings of the gospel, which I have briefly explained to you. A hearty consent to this, and nothing short of it, will save you. Come then, ye poor Africans, come add yourselves to the guests at this divine entertainment ; for yet there is room for you, and you are as welcome as kings and princes.

There being so much room left unoccupied in the spacious apartment, is represented as an excitement to the master of the feast to send out his servant to invite more guests : for when the servant had made this report, the master immediately orders him to *go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house might be filled.* He could not bear it, that the seats about his table should be empty, or his provisions be lost for want of guests. So the blessed God will not suffer the death of his Son to be in vain, nor the mansions he has prepared to be empty. That Jesus may see his spiritual seed, and the travail of his soul, and be satisfied ; and that the heavenly mansions he has prepared may be furnished with guests, God has appointed the ministry of the gospel, and the means of grace, to be continued from age to age ; for this end he exercises a providential government over the world, and manages all its affairs in subserviency to the grand scheme of redemption, for peopling the heavenly world with colonies transplanted from our guilty globe. For this he has continued our sinful world, so ripe for destruction, through the space of near 6000 years ; and he will not be defeated in his purpose If you and thousands more should refuse, yet his feast shall be furnished with guests. He will send his gospel where it will not pass for such a trifle as it does among many of us. He will send it, where thousands of perishing sinners will eagerly embrace it, and obtain eternal salvation by it. But O ! how deplorable will be your loss ! Since his house shall and must be filled, O ! why should it not be filled from Virginia, and particularly from among you, my dear people ? Will you not make trial, whether there be not seats prepared in heaven for you ? whether there be not room in the arms of divine mercy for you ? whether the blood of Christ has not efficacy to procure pardon and life even for you, great sinners as you are ? How can I forbear to urge this proposal upon my dear congregation ? We meet together in the house of God on earth ; and many of us sit down together at his table. And O ! why should we not all meet together at the great supper of the Lamb in heaven ? Why should we not, as it were, make an appointment, and engage to meet one another there, after the dis-

persion which death will soon make among us? While transported with so agreeable a thought, I feel myself zealous to execute the commission in my text.

Compel them to come in. Overcome them with arguments, subdue them with persuasions and entreaties, take no denial; never give over till you prevail. This is the commission of gospel-ministers: and O! that one of the meanest of them may be enabled to act according to it!

The patrons of persecution, those common enemies of liberty, religion, and human nature, have tortured this text to speak in their favour: and it has been their misfortune to be confirmed in their savage sentiment by the opinion of good St. Augustine, who understood it as authorizing and even requiring the propagation of Christianity, and the suppression of erroneous opinions, by the terrors of the secular power. In answer to this, I might observe, that we often find the word here rendered *compel*,* used in such a mild sense, as to signify only a compulsion by argument and entreaty. But it is sufficient to observe, that it is evident Christ never commissioned his apostles, nor did they ever pretend to propagate his religion, like Mahomet, with a sword in their hand, but by dint of evidence, and the power of the Holy Spirit:—and indeed, no other arms were fit to propagate a rational religion. The terrors of the secular arm may scare men into the profession of a religion, but they have no tendency to enlighten the understanding, or produce a real faith; and therefore they are fitted only to make hypocrites, but can never make one genuine, rational christian. The weapons of the apostolic warfare, which were so mighty through God, were miracles, reasoning, entreaty, and the love of a crucified Saviour; and these were adapted to the nature of the human mind, to subdue it without violence, and sweetly captivate every thought into obedience to Christ.

These weapons, as far as they may be used in our age, I would try upon you. I would compel you to come in, by considerations

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* ἀναγκάσον.

So Matt. xiv. 22. and Mark vi. 45 ἠνάγκασεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ ἐμβῆναι, Jesus compelled or constrained his disciples to go into a ship. St. Paul, in his reproof to St. Peter, Gal. ii. 14. tells him, "Why dost thou *compel* or *constrain* [ἀναγκάζεις] the Gentiles to act as do the Jews?" In which places, the word signifies *to compel*, not by violence, but by command, persuasion, or example. And in this sense men are, and ought to be, compelled to embrace the gospel.—Thus Tertullian, Qui studuerit intelligere, *cogetur* et credere.

so weighty and affecting, that they must prevail, unless reason, gratitude, and every generous principle, be entirely lost within you. By the consideration of your own extreme, perishing necessity; by the consideration of the freeness, the fulness, and sufficiency of the blessings offered; by the dread authority, by the mercy and love of the God that made you, and who is your constant Benefactor: by the meekness and gentleness of Christ: by the labours and toils of his life: by the agonies of his death: by his repeated injunctions, and by his melting invitations: by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon your hearts, and by the warnings of your own consciences: by the eternal joys of heaven, and the eternal pains of hell: by these considerations, and by every thing sacred, important, and dear to you; I exhort, I entreat, I charge, I adjure you, I would compel you to come in. You have refused, you have loitered, you have hesitated long enough: therefore now at length come in; come in immediately, without delay. Come in, that these rich provisions may not be lost for want of partakers, and that God's house may be completely furnished with guests. As yet there is room; as yet the guests are invited; as yet the door is not shut. The number of those who shall enjoy this great salvation is not yet made up. Therefore you may press in among them, and be added to their happy company. But, ere long, the ministry of the gospel will be withdrawn, the servants be recalled, and no longer be sent to search for you. The door of heaven will be shut against all the workers of iniquity. Therefore, now is the time to come in.

I shall only urge, as another persuasive, the awful denunciation that concludes my text: *I say unto you, none of those men who were bidden*, and refused the invitation, shall so much as *taste of my supper*; that is, none who now refuse to receive the blessings of the gospel, as they are offered, shall ever enjoy any of them; but must consume away a miserable eternity in the want of all that is good and happy.

Sermon 56.

The nature of justification, and the nature and concern of faith in it.

ROM. I. 16, 17. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek: for therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith—Or, therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to faith.**

HOWEVER little the gospel of Christ is esteemed in the world, it is certainly the most gracious and important dispensation of God towards the sons of men, or else our Bible is mere extravagance and fable; for the Bible speaks of it with the highest encomiums, and the sacred writers are often in transports when they mention it. It is called *the gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 24. *the gospel of salvation*, Eph. i. 13. *the glorious gospel*, or, *the gospel of the glory of* † *Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *the gospel of peace*, Eph. vi. 15. nay, its very name has something endearing in the sound, [Ευαγγελιον,] *good tidings, joyful news.* It is *the wisdom of God in a mystery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. *the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations*, Col. i. 26. *the ministration of the Spirit, and of righteousness*, which far exceeds all former dispensations in glory. 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. And it is represented as the only scheme for the salvation of sinners. When the wisdom of the world had used its utmost efforts in vain, it pleased God, by the despised preaching of this humble gospel, to save them that believe. 1 Cor. i. 21. In my text it is called *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.* St. Paul, though the humblest man that ever lived, declares he would not be ashamed of professing and preaching the gospel of Christ, even in Rome, the metropolis of the world, the seat of learning, politeness and grandeur. He represents it as a catholicon, an universal remedy, equally adapted to Jews and Greeks, to the posterity of Abraham, and to the numerous Gentile nations, and equally needed by them all.

* Doddridge in loc. † Ευαγγελιὸν τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Now this must be all extravagance and ostentatious parade, unless there be something peculiarly glorious and endearing in the gospel. It must certainly give the most illustrious display of the divine perfections ; it must be the most grand contrivance of infinite wisdom : the most rich and amazing exertion of unbounded goodness : and particularly, it must bear the most favourable aspect upon the guilty sons of men, and be the best, nay, the only scheme for their salvation. And what are the glorious peculiarities, what are the endearing recommendations of this gospel ? One of them, in which we are nearly interested, strikes our eyes in my text, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.* Here let us inquire into the meaning of the expressions, and point out the connection.

The righteousness of God has generally one uniform signification in the writings of St. Paul ; and by it he means that righteousness, upon the account of which a sinner is justified : that righteousness, for the sake of which his sins are forgiven, and he is restored to the divine favour : In short, it is our only justifying righteousness. It may be called the righteousness of God, to distinguish it from our own personal righteousness : it is the righteousness of God, a complete, perfect, divine, and Godlike righteousness, and not the mean, imperfect, scanty righteousness of sinful, guilty men. So it seems to be taken, Rom. x. 3. *Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ;* where the righteousness of God is directly opposed to, and distinguished from, their own righteousness.

The various descriptions of this righteousness, and of justification by it, which we find in the apostolic writings, may assist us to understand the nature of it ; and therefore it may be proper for me to lay them before you in one view. It is frequently called the righteousness of Christ ; and it is said to consist in his obedience : *by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous ;* Rom. v. 19. Now obedience consists in the strict observance of a law ; and consequently the obedience of Christ, which is our justifying righteousness, consists in his obedience to the law of God. Hence he is said to be *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Rom. x. 4, 5. To be justified by his righteousness, is the same thing as to be justified by his blood, Rom. v. 9. to be reconciled to God by his death, &c. verse 10. From whence we may learn, that the sufferings of Christ are a

principal part of this righteousness ; or, that he not only obeyed the precept, but also endured the penalty of the divine law in our stead ; and that it is only on this account we can be justified.

This righteousness is called the righteousness of God without the law, Rom. iii. 21. an imputed righteousness without works, Rom. iv. 6. And it is plain, from the whole tenor of this epistle, and that to the Galatians, that the righteousness by which we are justified, is entirely different from our own obedience to the law : and hence we may learn, that our own merit or good works do not in whole or in part constitute our justifying righteousness ; but that it is wholly, entirely and exclusively, the merit of Christ's obedience and sufferings.

This righteousness is often called the righteousness of faith. Thus, according to some, it is denominated in my text, which may be thus rendered, *For in it the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith :* and this is most agreeable to the phraseology of this epistle. Others, following our translation—or the apparent order of the original, understand it in another sense ; yet still so as to assign faith a peculiar concern in the affair. *The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith* ; that is, according to some, it is entirely and all through by faith ;* or, from one degree of faith to another ; or from faith to faith, from believer to believer, all the world over, among the Jews and Gentiles ; or from the faithfulness of God in the word, to the grace of faith in the heart. You see that whatever sense you put upon this difficult phrase, it still coincides with or countenances the translation, which I would rather choose, *The righteousness of faith is revealed to faith.* So it is expressly called in Romans, iii. 22. *the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ.* See chap. iv. 11. 13. x. vi. Phil. iii. 9. *Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* From whence we may infer, that faith has a peculiar concurrence of instrumentality in our justification by the righteousness of Christ. I need not enlarge on this particular ; for to be justified by faith in Christ, in his blood, by believing in Christ, and the like, are such frequent scripture-expressions, as put the matter out of all doubt.

My text farther observes that in the gospel this justifying righteousness is revealed to faith ; that is, in the gospel it is clearly discovered, proposed and offered as an object of faith. The light

* See Mr. Locke.

of nature is all darkness and uncertainty on this important point; it can only offer obscure and mistaken conjectures concerning the method of pardon and acceptance for a guilty sinner; it leaves the anxious conscience still unsatisfied, and perplexed with the grand inquiry, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? How shall such a guilty creature as I re-obtain the favour of my provoked sovereign?" It may suggest some plausible things in favour of repentance, as the only method of pardon; it may flatter the sinner, that a God of infinite goodness will not rigorously execute his law; and it may draw a veil over the attribute of his justice; and thus it may build the hopes of the sinner upon the ruin of the divine government, and the dishonour of the divine perfections. But a method of justification by the righteousness of another, by the obedience and death of an incarnate God; by his perfect obedience to the law, and complete satisfaction to justice, instead of the sinner; a method in which sin may be pardoned, and in the mean time, the honours of the divine government advanced, and the divine perfections gloriously illustrated; this is *a mystery*, which was *hid from ages and generations;* this was a grand secret, which all the sages and philosophers, and all the sons of men, who had nothing but the light of nature for their guide, could not discover, nor indeed so much as guess at.—This scheme was as far above their thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Nothing but infinite wisdom could contrive it: nothing but omniscience could reveal it. In the writings of Moses and the prophets, indeed, we meet with some glimmerings of it; some few rays of gospel-light were reflected back from the Sun of Righteousness, through the dark medium of 3 or 4000 years, and shone upon the minds of the Jews, in the sacrifices, and other significant types of the law, and in the prophecies of the Old Testament writers; and hence the apostle says, that *the righteousness of God is witnessed by the law and the prophets*, Rom. iii. 21; but it is in the gospel alone that it is explicitly and fully revealed: in the gospel alone it is proposed in full glory, as a proper object for a distinct, particular and explicit faith.

And hence you may easily see the strong and striking connection of the text. You may connect this sentence, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, with the first part of a foregoing text, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;* and then the sense will be, "No wonder I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ among Jews or Gentiles, and even in Rome

itself ; for it makes a most glorious and important discovery, in which they are all concerned ; a discovery which the Jews, with all the advantages of the law and the prophets, could not clearly make : a discovery which the Greeks, with all their learning and philosophy, and the Romans with all their power and improvements, could not so much as guess at ; and that is the discovery of a complete God-like righteousness, by which the guilty sons of men of every nation under heaven, may obtain justification from all their sins ; a righteousness which is a sufficient foundation for the hopes of sinners, and gives the most majestic and amiable view of the great God : a righteousness, without which Jews and Gentiles, and even the Romans in the height of empire, must unavoidably, irreparably, universally, and eternally perish, in promiscuous ruin." Such a glorious and divine righteousness does the neglected and despised gospel reveal ; such a benevolent, gracious, and reviving discovery does it make ; and who would be ashamed of such a gospel ! " For my part," says St. Paul, " I am not ashamed of it, but would boldly publish it unto kings and emperors, to sages and philosophers ; and whatever sufferings I endure for its sake, still I glory in so good a cause, and would spend and be spent in its service."

Or we may join this clause, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*, with the last part of the preceding verse, *For it is the power of God unto salvation*, &c. and then the connection will run thus : " The gospel of Christ, so destitute of all carnal and secular recommendations, is sufficiently recommended to universal acceptance by this, that it is the only powerful and efficacious expedient for the salvation of all such as believe it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. And no wonder it is attended with this divine power and efficacy, for in it, and in it only, the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to the faith and acceptance of a guilty world. No religion but that of a Mediator, can provide or propose such a righteousness ; and yet, without such a righteousness, no sinner, whether Jew or Gentile, can be saved : and, on the other hand, the revelation of such a righteousness directly tends to promote the important work of salvation, as it encourages the despairing sinner, and inspires him with vigour : and as it lays a foundation for the honourable communication of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which this work can never be effected."

I hope these things are sufficient to give you a view of the sense and connection of the text. And there is only one thing I would repeat and illustrate before I proceed to a methodical prosecution of my subject; and that is, that the righteousness of God, or the righteousness of Christ, on account of which we are justified, signifies the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ, to answer the demands of the law, which we had broken; or, as it is usually expressed, "his active and passive obedience" He obeyed the law, and endured its penalty, as the surety or substitute of sinners: that is, he did all this, not for himself, but for them, or in their stead. This is a matter of so much importance, that you should by all means rightly understand it; and I hope it is now sufficiently plain without enlarging upon it, though I thought it necessary to repeat it.

My thoughts on this interesting subject I intend to dispose in the following order:

I. I shall briefly explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and shew you the place it has in our justification.

II. I shall shew, that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner: And,

III. I shall evince that it is the gospel only which reveals such a righteousness.

I. I am to explain to you the nature of justifying faith, and shew you the place it has in our justification.

You see I do not propose to explain the general nature of faith, as it has for its object the word of God in general; but only under that formal notion, as it has a peculiar instrumentality in our justification. When I mentioned the term justification, it occurs to my mind that some of you may not understand it; and for the sake of such, I would explain it. You cannot but know what it is to be pardoned, or forgiven, after you have offended: and it must be equally plain to you what it is to be loved, and received into favour, by a person whom you have offended; and these two things are meant by justification: when you are justified, God pardons or forgives you all your sins; and he receives you again into his love and favour, and gives you a title to everlasting happiness. I hope this important point is now sufficiently plain to you all; and I return to observe, that I intend to consider faith at present, only under that formal notion, as we are justified by it; and in that view it is evident that the Lord Jesus, as a Saviour who died for sinners, is its peculiar object. Hence a justifying faith

is so often described in scripture in such terms as these; *Believing in Christ, faith in his blood*, &c. and the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified, is called *the righteousness of faith, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, &c. Therefore a justifying faith in Christ includes these two things—a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the gospel reveals—and a hearty approbation of and consent to that method of salvation.

(I.) A justifying faith includes a full persuasion of the truth of that method of salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ which the gospel reveals.

Faith, in its general nature, is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of another. A divine faith is the belief of a thing upon the testimony of God; and consequently faith in Christ must be the belief of the testimony of God concerning him in the gospel. Hence faith is said to be a receiving *the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son*; and unbelief, on the other hand, is the *not believing the record which God gave of his Son*. 1 John v. 9, 10. Now St. John tells us, that the substance of *the record or testimony, which God hath given of his Son, is this*: *That God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son*, verse 11. that is, "God in the gospel testifies, that he has established and revealed a method of bestowing immortal life and blessedness upon guilty sinners, who were justly condemned to everlasting death. And he farther testifies, that it is only in and through his Son Jesus Christ that this life and blessedness can be obtained; it is only through him that it can be hoped for; and nothing appears but horror and despair from every other quarter. Now faith is a firm, affecting persuasion of the truth of this gracious and important testimony. And as the foundation of all is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah, promised as the Saviour of sinners; hence it is, that believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, &c. is so frequently the definition of faith.

The scheme of salvation through Jesus Christ, supposes that all are sinners, exposed to condemnation, and unable to make satisfaction for their offences, or merit the divine favour by any thing they can do or suffer; and represents the Lord Jesus as substituting himself in the place of the guilty, bearing the punishment due to their sin, and obeying the law of God in their stead; and it represents our injured Sovereign as willing to be reconciled to such of his guilty creatures, on this account; but

then that, in order to enjoy the blessings of righteousness, they must, as guilty, helpless sinners, place their whole dependance upon it, and plead it as the only ground of their justification; and that, though they must abound in good works, yet they must not make these in the least the ground of their hopes of pardon and acceptance. This is the substance of the testimony of God in the gospel: this testimony has been repeatedly published in your ears; and if you have believed with a justifying faith, you have yielded a full assent to this testimony; you are thoroughly convinced, and deeply sensible that these things are true, and you can cheerfully venture your eternal all upon the truth of them. You are convinced that this Jesus is indeed the only Saviour; that his righteousness is alone sufficient, and to the entire exclusion of every other righteousness in point of justification. Such a faith may appear a very easy thing to a careless, impenitent sinner, who has imbibed this belief from his earliest days, and found no more difficulty in it than in learning his creed, or assenting to a piece of history. But a person of this character is not at all the subject of a saving faith; it is the poor self condemned penitent, broken-hearted sinner, that is capable of such a faith: and truly it is no easy matter to him: for one that sees his sins in all their aggravations, the divine law, and the righteous severity of divine justice; one that finds the lusts and prejudices of his heart rising against this method of salvation as foolishness, and as giving an intolerable mortification to his pride and vanity; for such a one to believe, is not an easy matter; *it is the working of God's mighty power.* Eph. i. 19. But,

(II.) A justifying faith more peculiarly includes a hearty approbation of and consent to this method of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

To believe the gospel as a true history; to believe it as a true theory or speculation, with a languor, an indifferency, or a disaffection of heart, this indeed is the common popular faith of our country, and it generally prevails where the profession of christianity is become fashionable; but alas! it is not that faith by which we can be justified and saved. A hearty approbation of the way of salvation through Christ; a willing, delightful dependance of the whole soul upon his righteousness; a free vigorous choice of it, and a cheerful consent to all the terms of the gospel; this is essential to such a faith. It is the greatest incongruity to suppose that it is sufficient to believe the gospel with

a lukewarm indifferency, or a careless unaffecting assent; or that our faith in Christ should be merely the act of a constrained, necessitated soul. He is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well-pleased; and we must be well-pleased with him too, before we can expect salvation by him. To receive a scheme which God has so much at heart, a scheme, for the accomplishment of which Jesus bled and died; a scheme on which our everlasting life depends, and without which we are undone forever; to receive such a scheme with a languid assent, what profaneness! what impiety!

If you have ever truly believed in Jesus Christ, my brethren, it has not been the languid act of a cold, impenitent, unwilling heart, but your whole souls have exerted their utmost vigour in it, and it has been the most cheerful, animated act of your whole lives. It is true, necessity had no small influence in the case. You saw, you felt yourselves lost forever without this righteousness; you saw no other way of escape or safety; you found yourselves shut up to the faith: and it was this sense of your necessity that first set you upon seeking after Christ, and turned your thoughts towards this method of salvation. But when God *shined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ*, when you received the first glances of his glorious righteousness, and heard, as with new ears, the offer of it in the gospel, stand, and pause, and recollect what were your sentiments, and the temper of your heart in that important and memorable hour. Was not their language, "Blessed Jesus! till now I have been blindly seeking after thee from a servile principle, not from the agreeable constraint of love, but from the painful compulsion of fear, horror, and necessity; not because I desired thee on account of thine own excellency, but because I was desirous to be saved from hell, though it should be by an unacceptable hand. I have been striving to work up my reluctant heart to a compliance with thy gospel, not because I saw thy glory, but merely because I must perish forever if I rejected it. But now, when I see thy glory, O thou lovely Saviour, I long and languish for thee, and cheerfully receive thee, because I love thee. Salvation itself is endeared to me, by the thought that it comes from thy dear hand. I place all my dependance on thy righteousness, because I see it is all illustrious and amiable, and secures the glory of God, which I have tenderly at heart, as well as my salvation. I now most cheerfully consent to the

method of salvation revealed in the gospel, not only because I must, but because I choose to do so. I see it is a scheme *well ordered in all things, and sure*, and therefore it is all my salvation and all my desire. I would not only be saved, but I would be saved by thee, blessed Jesus! I am willing, I am desirous, that thou, and not I, should have the glory of it. I would rather see thy grace honoured than my own vanity and pride flattered, and therefore I cheerfully renounce my own righteousness, and count it but dross and dung, in comparison of thine, which I embrace with all my heart. Pardon is sweet to a guilty criminal; salvation is sweet to a perishing soul; but O! pardon by thy righteousness, salvation through thy grace, this is doubly sweet." Such, my brethren, has been, and such still is the language of your hearts, if you have ever received *the righteousness of Christ by faith.*

And hence it follows, that faith supposes the supernatural illumination of the mind and renovation of the heart, by the power of divine grace. Alas! while nature is left in its original darkness and depravity, it has no such views of the way of salvation through Christ, nor any such delight in it. There are many, I am afraid, that secretly wonder what peculiar wisdom and grace there should be in the gospel, and why God should commend it so highly, and saints should be in raptures when they speak of it; for as for their part, they can discover no such great matters in it. Their hearts are cold and careless about it, or form insurrections against it. The way of salvation through the righteousness of Christ is something quite unnatural and mortifying to the sinful sons of men; they have no relish for it, nor aptitude or inclination to seek salvation in this way; it is much more natural for them to choose some other, though it should be much more painful. They will submit to the heaviest penances and bodily austerities; they will afflict themselves with fasting; they will drudge at the duties of religion, in order to work out a righteousness of their own; and they are as fond of the covenant of works to obtain life, as if it had never been broken. But tell them of a free salvation, purchased by Jesus Christ, and offered in the gospel; tell them that it is only on account of his righteousness they can be pardoned, and that all their personal good works, however necessary for other purposes, must all stand for nothing in this affair; they are amazed, and wonder what you mean: it is strange unintelligible doctrine to them, and their hearts rise against it. Hence many a believer has found that it

was easier for him to work up his heart to any thing than to believe in Jesus Christ, and that God alone could enable him to do this. But, when God works in him the work of faith with power, he opens his understanding to see a surprising glory in the mediatorial scheme of salvation, and gives him a heart to relish it: and without this, no external recommendations of this scheme, no speculative conviction in its favour, can gain the cordial approbation of the sinner.

I shall now endeavour, in a few words, to shew you the peculiar place which faith has in our justification. You may observe then, that as the righteousness of Christ is the peculiar ground of our justification, so the grace of faith has a peculiar reference to that righteousness; it is, as it were, the bent of the soul towards that particular object. Repentance has sin for its object; love the intrinsic glory and communicated goodness of the divine nature; charity and justice have a reference to man; and none of these objects are the proper grounds of our justification; and consequently none of these graces which terminate upon them can have any direct concurrence in it. But our justifying righteousness is the immediate, direct object of faith; and therefore faith must have a special instrumentality in our justification.

And if we recollect what has been said about the nature of faith, there will appear a peculiar propriety in conferring this honour upon it. It is certainly fit we should believe in him who is our Saviour; and it would be absurd to apply to him in that character, while we suspect him for an impostor. It is fit we should approve of the righteousness by which we are justified, and heartily consent to that scheme by which we are saved. And, on the other hand, it would be highly preposterous that we should be justified and saved by a Saviour, and in a way we despise or disgust. These considerations shew not only the wisdom, but the grace of the constitution. Approve of the Saviour, and you shall be saved; trust in his righteousness, and you shall be justified; consent to the covenant of grace, and you shall inherit all its blessings; and could you desire lower or easier terms? This approbation, this trust, this consent is faith: and now, I hope, you see the peculiar place it has in our justification. Let us now proceed,

II. To shew you that no righteousness but that which the gospel reveals is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

In order to form a right judgment of this matter, we must place ourselves in a proper situation and view it in an advantageous point of light. Is a blind, self-flattering sinner, who does not see the strictness of the law and justice of God, or who secretly murmurs at it as too precise and rigid, who does not see the infinite evil of sin, but loves it, indulges it, and is expert in making excuses for it, and diminishing its aggravations, who forms his maxims of the divine government from the procedure of weak and partial mortals in human governments, who compares himself with his fellow-sinners, and not with the divine purity, and the holy law of God, whose conscience is secure, who places the tribunal of his supreme Judge far out of sight, and who forms his notions of his government not from his word, but from the flattering suggestions of his own deceitful heart: I say, is such a blind, partial, careless sinner a competent judge in this matter? Is he likely to form a just estimate of the evil of sin, and of that righteousness which will be sufficient for his acquittance before a just and righteous God? By no means. But it is easy for such a one to start objections against this method of justification, and offer many plausible arguments in favour of his own righteousness, and to extenuate his own guilt. But let him be awakened to see himself and his sins in a proper light, and let him see the purity and extent of the divine law, and make that the only test of his good works, let him realize the divine tribunal, and place himself in the immediate presence of his Judge, let him be put in this situation, and then the controversy will be soon at n end; then all his high thoughts of his own righteousness are mortified: all his excuses for his sins are silenced; and then he sees his absolute need of a perfect and divine righteousness, and the utter insufficiency of his own. O Sirs! if you have ever placed yourselves in this posture, you have done forever with all disputes on this po int. What could ease your consciences then but the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ? O! "none but Christ, none but Christ," then appeared sufficient.

Here I beg leave to translate a very animated and striking passage, written about 200 years ago, by that great and good man, Calvin, who had long groped for salvation among the doctrines of merit in the church of Rome, but could find no relief, till the gospel discovered this righteousness to him. "It is a very easy thing," says he, "to amuse ourselves with arguments for the suf-

ficiency of good works for justification, while we are ingeniously trifling in schools and colleges of learning; but when we come into the presence of God, we have done with all such amusements: for there it is a very serious affair, and not a ludicrous logomachy, or an idle dispute about words. There, there we must place ourselves, if we would profitably inquire after the true righteousness, and how we shall answer our celestial Judge when he shall call us to an account. Let us represent this Judge to ourselves, and not such as our fancies would imagine him to be, but such as he is really represented in the scriptures; as one by whose brightness the stars are turned into darkness; by whose power the mountains are melted; at whose anger the earth trembles; by whose wisdom the wise are caught in their own craftiness; before whose purity all things are turned into pollution: whose justice even angels are not sufficient to bear; who will by no means clear the guilty; whose vengeance, when once it is kindled, burns and penetrates to the lowest hell: let him, I say, sit Judge on the actions of men, and who can securely place himself before his throne of judgment?" *Lord, if thou mark iniquity, who, O Lord, shall stand!* " All must be condemned, and unavoidably perish." *Shall mortal man be* justified before God? or *be purer than his Maker? Behold he putteth no trust in his servants; and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!* Job iv. 17, &c. *Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!* Job xv. 15, &c. " Eliphaz is struck silent; for he sees that God cannot be appeased even with angelic holiness, if their works should be brought to the impartial scale of justice.—And certainly if our lives should be compared to the standard of the divine law, we must be stupid indeed, unless we are struck with the terror of its curses, and particularly of that, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And all the disputes we may have about the method of justification, are vain and insipid, unless we place ourselves as guilty before our heavenly Judge, and, solicitous for a pardon, voluntarily prostrate and empty ourselves before him.

" To this great tribunal, sinners, you must lift your eyes, that, instead of vainly exalting yourselves, you may learn to tremble

before him. While the comparison is between man and man, it is easy for every man to think he has something which others should not despise; but when we place ourselves before God, all that confidence falls and perishes in an instant."*

I might go on with my quotation from this excellent author; but this is sufficient to shew you a grand pre-requisite to the impartial determination of this point. And now, with a deep impression of this, with a deep sense of our sins, and of the strictness of the law and justice, and placing ourselves, as in the presence of our righteous Judge, let us inquire what righteousness is sufficient for our justification before him.

It may be of service to observe, that there is something singular in the phraseology of scripture on this point, and different from what is used in other cases of the same general nature. To receive a pardon is a very different thing, in common language, from being justified. When a man is pardoned, it supposes that he has broken the law, but that the law is dispensed with, and the threatened penalty not executed; but when he is justified, it supposes that he has a righteousness equal to the demands of the law, and therefore that he may be acquitted according to justice.—These, you see, are very different things; but in the affair before us, they are happily united. The sinner is said to be pardoned and justified at once; and the reason of this unusual dialect is this:—The sinner has broken the divine law, and has no obedience to answer its demands; and therefore, his being freed from the guilt of sin and the threatened punishment, is, in this respect, a gracious unmerited pardon. But by faith he has received the righteousness of Christ; and God imputes it to him, as though it were his own: and this righteousness answers all the requisitions of the law, and it has no charges against him: so that, in this respect, he is justified, or pronounced righteous according to law and justice.

Hence it follows, from the very meaning of the terms used in this case, that no righteousness can justify us in the sight of God, but that which is equal to all the demands of the divine law. It must be perfect, and conformed throughout to that standard; for if it be not, we cannot be pronounced righteous in the eye of the law; but the law charges and condemns us as transgressors, and its sentence lies in full force against us. And now, if any of you have such a perfect righteousness, produce it, glory in it, and car-

* Calvin. Instit. Lib. iii.

ry it with you to the divine tribunal, and demand acquittance there. But if you have not, (as, if you know yourselves, you must own you have not) then fall down as guilty sinners before your righteous Judge, confess that you dare not appear in his presence in your own righteousness, but lay hold of and plead the righteousness of Jesus alone, otherwise the law thunders out its terrors against you, and justice will seize you as obnoxious criminals.

It was from such premises as these, that the apostle reasoned, when he drew this conclusion, *that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified*, Rom. iii. 20, 28. and that we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. He grants, that if any can produce a perfect righteousness of their own, they shall obtain life by the law : *the law*, says he, *is not of faith : but the man that doth* these things, *shall live in them*. Gal. iii. 12. But then he proves, that all the sons of men, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and consequently have no righteousness agreeable to the law : He stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world, as guilty, before God : and hence, he infers the impossibility of justification by the works of the law : and then he naturally introduces another righteousness equal to all the demands of the law. *But now*, says he, *the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested,—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe :—being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins :—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* Rom. iii. 21—26. O glorious scheme of salvation ! O complete, divine righteousness ! A righteousness by which Jew and Gentile, the greatest sinner as well as the least, may be made divinely righteous, and completely justified, even at the bar of a holy and just God.—Here, ye guilty sinners, ye condemned criminals, ye bleeding consciences, here is the only righteousness for you. Put forth the hand of faith, and humbly lay hold upon it. Here fix your trust, and renounce your own righteousness as filthy rags ; for whatever you think of it now, this will be found the only defence at the tribunal of the supreme Judge.

It would be easy to collect a great variety of arguments to support this important truth ; but if you carefully read over the apostolic writings, particularly this epistle to the Romans, and that to the Galatians, you cannot but be satisfied for yourselves. And

this brings me in mind of a frank declaration of that true free-thinker, and impartial inquirer after truth, Dr. Watts. "If I may be permitted to speak of myself," says he, "I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience, I resolved to seek a determination of my doubts from the Epistles of St. Paul, especially in that weighty doctrine of Justification. I perused his letter to the Romans with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones. I met with some expressions of the apostle that swayed me to one opinion, and others, that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way; but I bless the Divine Goodness that enabled me at last to surmount all these difficulties, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness, which is not originally his own."* This was the practice of this excellent man; and you see the result of his search. Go you and do likewise; and I doubt not but you will make the same discovery.—I am,

III. and lastly, To shew that it is the gospel only that reveals such a righteousness as is sufficient for the justification of a sinner.

The Jewish religion, as I observed before, gave several intimations of this method of justification by the righteousness of another. There were many prophecies and types of this import; and this was undoubtedly the original design of sacrifices; for it is quite unaccountable, that ever men should imagine that they could appease the wrath of God, and procure the pardon of sin, by offering to him sacrifices of brutes in their stead, unless we suppose that God did at first institute this method to signify that the way in which he would be reconciled to sinners was by the sufferings and death of another, as a sacrifice substituted in their room. This institution seems to have been immediately after the fall of man, when the first beam of gospel-light blessed our world in that promise, *the seed of the woman*, &c. for we are told that God made coats of skins, and with them covered our first parents. Gen. iii. 21. Now animal food was not allowed to man till after the flood: and

* Orthodoxy and Charity united. Essay vii. § 1.

consequently those beasts, whose skins were used for this purpose, were not killed for that use: and we cannot suppose they died naturally so soon after their creation. It is therefore most probable that Adam had killed them for sacrifices; and that God had commanded him to do this, immediately upon the promulgation of that promise, to typify the manner of its accomplishment, namely, by the sacrifice of Christ in the fulness of time. This practice we find continued by Cain and Abel: and thus Noah consecrated the new world after the flood. Gen. viii. 20.

But though the patriarchs and Jews had these intimations of the method of pardon and acceptance, they were very dark and perplexing to them; and just as much as they had of this light, just so much they had of the gospel; and therefore the gospel, taking the word in its full extent, claims the honour of this discovery.

Now, if we except the patriarchal and Jewish religion, which had a mixture of the gospel in it, there is none that pretends to discover a complete and perfect righteousness and atonement for the justification of a sinner. The religion of Mahomet is silent on this head; and the Socrateses and Platos of heathen antiquity, who had only the light of nature for their guide, knew nothing about it; much less did the ignorant populace, who are always the greater part of mankind. The custom of sacrifice was indeed universal: but, as it was received by a very remote tradition, mankind had quite lost its original design; and they corrupted it into the most absurd and cruel superstition. They offered their sacrifices to imaginary deities, or (as the apostle tells us) to devils. 1 Cor. x. 20. They were so unnatural and barbarous, that they offered human sacrifices, and even their own children, to propitiate their angry gods. And, if we may believe some of their best authors, this was often practised by the express command of their oracles:—a sufficient evidence that it was not the true God that gave answers by them. Alas! how were the poor creatures bewildered and perplexed about the method of expiating their sins! They spared no cost; *they offered even the fruit of their body, for the sin of their souls;* but alas! how vain, as well as impious a sacrifice was this; and yet this was the utmost that nature in distress could do. They knew nothing of the great atonement which was to be made by the High Priest of the christian profession, which the gospel reveals to us. Nay, the Jews themselves are often reproved by the prophets for their self-

righteous trust in their sacrifices, to the neglect of their morals, and the grand atonement which they prefigured. The light of nature might teach the heathen world, that if they perfectly obeyed the law of God, they might be assured of his favour, or at least that they should not be punished; but it informed them in the mean time, that they had not done so, but, on the other hand, had repeatedly broken the law of God; and they had no notion at all of the possibility of their being justified by the righteousness of another.

This alone determines the point I am now proving. I have shewn already, that a sinner cannot be justified but by a perfect righteousness; and it is evident that none of the sons of men can pretend to such a righteousness. Where then can it be found? Consult the light of nature; ask the multitude in the heathen world; nay, ask their most improved sages and philosophers, and you will find all silent, all bewildered and perplexed: nothing was ever farther from their thoughts than a complete atonement for sin by the death of an innocent and divine person. I appeal to such of the negroes as came from Africa as the best judges in this case. Did you ever hear in your own country, of a righteousness equal to all the requisitions of the law of God, by which you could be justified? Was there no thoughtful person among you whose conscience was uneasy about his sins against a holy God, and who was concerned how he should obtain a pardon? And what way did he take to ease his mind? Alas! he knew nothing *of the righteousness of God by faith.* This happy discovery, poor creatures, you have met with in the land of your bondage; and O! if you make a proper use of it, it will make your slavery the greatest blessing to you.

The light of nature might surmise a great many things upon this head, but alas! all was uncertain, and more frequently the dictates of ignorance and self-flattery than of an enlightened mind. It might intimate, "that God is the compassionate Father of mankind, and therefore would dispense with the threatenings of his law, and not execute them rigorously upon his own creatures." This we often hear urged by sinners among ourselves, who, notwithstanding their profession of christianity, will form a system of religion, and a scheme of reconciliation with God, according to their own selfish and flattering prejudices; and it seems to them incredible that God should inflict eternal punishment on his own creatures for the sins of a few years. But to this it might be re-

plied, that since God is the Father of mankind, it is a more unnatural and aggravated wickedness to sin against him: that he is not only the Parent but also the Lawgiver and Judge of the world, and that he must sustain both these characters with honour. He must exercise not only the fondness and indulgent discipline of a father, but also the justice and righteous severity of a ruler and judge: he must maintain the honour of his law, and preserve his government from contempt; and therefore the communications of his goodness must be consistent with justice. He must also execute his laws upon sinners, in order to warn and deter others; and therefore every sinner must tremble for fear of the execution of the divine threatenings upon him. To all this I may add, that the miseries that are inflicted by divine Providence in this world, and that very often upon the best of men, must increase the perplexity, and leave the sinner in a dreadful suspense.

If God does not suffer the sins even of the best of men always to escape unpunished in this world, but afflicts them with pains, sickness, and an endless variety of calamities, how can our reason, that knows so little of the counsels of Heaven, assure us that he will not punish them also, and that with greater severity, in the world to come? Nothing but a revelation from himself could ease an anxious mind from this dread suspicion.

The light of nature may also perhaps surmise, "That repentance and reformation are sufficient to procure the pardon of sin:" and mankind seem naturally inclined to look for pardon in this way. Hence sinners among ourselves, notwithstanding the clearer discoveries of the gospel, fly to repentance and reformation, not only as a pre-requisite to their salvation, but as sufficient ground of acceptance; and they gaze and wonder at a man if he intimates the contrary. It must be granted on all hands, that repentance and reformation are necessary; but the question is, are repentance and reformation alone sufficient? And this is easily answered, if what has been proved before be true, viz. That no righteousness but that which is perfect, and fully conformed to the divine law, can be sufficient for our justification. Now repentance, at best, is but a reformation from a wrong course, and a return to obedience; which should never have been interrupted. If the reformation were perfect, it would be but doing what we are obliged to do for the present time; and consequently it can be no atonement or satisfaction to the law for past offences; but

alas ! it is imperfect, and therefore cannot pay the debt of obedience for the present time. The sinner, in the midst of all his repentance and reformation, is sinning still ; there are guilty imperfections in his best duties ; and can these atone for his past sins ? So that repentance and reformation cannot be a sufficient justifying righteousness. Again, what kind of government would that be among men, in which all crimes were pardoned upon repentance ? What encouragement would this give to offenders ? How soon would such a government fall into contempt ! and what a low idea would it give of the wisdom and justice of the ruler, and of the evil of sin ! And shall the Supreme Ruler imitate so weak a conduct, and thus obscure his perfections, depreciate his laws, and encourage vice ?

It is a virtue in a private man to forgive an injury ; and it may be a piece of generosity in such a one to give up some of his rights ; but, as I have told you, God is not to be considered, in this case, as a private person, but as a Ruler, a supreme Ruler at the head of the universe : and sin is an offence against him in that capacity ; and therefore for reasons of state, it is not fit he should put up with it, or remit it merely upon the sinner's repentance. He must maintain the dignity of law and government, and consult the public good ; not the good of this man and that, nor even of the whole race of men, but of men through all their generations ; of angels through all their various ranks and orders, and in short, of the whole universe of reasonable creatures ? and the interest of individuals must be subservient to the more general good of the whole. An error in such an extensive government, through an excessive lenity towards offenders, would have a most extensive ill influence, and injure more worlds than we know of. If the magistrate in one particular government be lax in the execution of the laws, he may injure a whole nation : and if he should suppose all the nations of the earth united in one universal monarchy, under one head : if that universal monarch should be remiss in the execution of justice, the consequence would be still more extensively mischievous. But what would be the consequence, if the universal Ruler of heaven and earth and the whole creation, should relax his law, and suffer sin to go unpunished, upon so cheap a retaliation as repentance ? No human government could be supported upon this principle, much less the divine.

Further: It should be considered, that, in order to encourage offenders to repent, it is necessary it should be made a fixed constitution, and openly published, that whosoever, in all time coming, should be guilty of any offence against the laws of God, he shall be forgiven if he does but repent. Now, what encouragement would such a declaration give to sin! It would also be unprecedented in human governments. It is true, civil rulers do forgive some offenders: but then they do not declare beforehand that they will do so, or who the objects of their clemency shall be. To make a previous declaration of this, would be to give licence to men to break the law. Let it be also considered, that when civil rulers forgive criminals, there is no necessity they should receive them into special favour; but in the divine government these two things are inseparable: there is no medium between high favour and misery. When God forgives, he receives the sinner into complete happiness and intimacy with himself, as well as rescues him from punishment. And is it fit he should do this, merely upon his repentance? How would such a conduct look in human governments?

Finally, the pardon of a crime, is a matter of sovereignty, and only has place in such governments where the royal prerogative is above law, and has a power to dispense with it. Whether such a prerogative belongs to the divine government (that is, whether it would be a perfection upon the whole in such a government) I shall not now dispute: but suppose it be, still it is a matter of sovereignty; that is, it lies entirely in the breast of the Supreme Ruler, whether he will pardon penitents or not; and they can know his pleasure no other way but by his declaring it. This consideration therefore shews the necessity of a revelation from God, to give a sinner assurance that he will pardon him upon any terms. The light of nature leaves a sinner entirely at mercy, and awfully uncertain whether ever he can re-obtain the favour of his offended Sovereign. Now, this revelation we have in the gospel, with the additional discovery of the way in which forgiveness and acceptance can be obtained. And it appears, from this short survey, that it is in the gospel alone we can find this discovery.

I shall now conclude with two reflections.

I. Let this subject lead us to a strict examination of the ground of our hopes, whether they be founded on the righteousness of

God alone, or partly at least upon our own. To speak freely, I am afraid that some of you, my dear people, have built upon this sandy foundation: This may be the case of some of you who have very fair characters; for it is such sort of persons, and not those who make little or no pretensions to good works, that are most in danger of the extreme of self-righteousness. I therefore beg you would inquire after this sly, lurking delusion; a delusion which perverts the best things into the worst, and makes your good works the occasion of your destruction, instead of means of salvation. I beg you would inquire, whether ever you have been deeply sensible of the aggravated evil of sin, the perfection of God's law, the strictness of his justice, and the guilty imperfections of your own best works: whether ever you have seen the glory of God in the gospel, and the excellency and sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ? Have you cheerfully embraced it with your whole souls! And do you lay the whole dependance of your salvation upon it? My brethren, how are your hearts affected towards the gospel in this age of infidelity, when it is treated with sneer and ridicule, and browbeaten with contempt and insult? Do you glory in it, and venture your all upon it? Do you find it is the only relief for your wounded consciences, the only cordial for your sinking hearts? Do your whole souls embrace it with the tenderest endearment, and tenaciously cling to it as the only (*tabula-post-naufragium*) plank to keep you from sinking, after the general wreck of human nature? Do you relish its doctrines, even those that are the most mortifying to your pride and vanity, and love to hear them honestly preached? Are the humble, despised doctrines of the cross sweet to you, and the very life of your souls? If you can give a comfortable answer to these inquiries, then,

II. This subject affords you abundant encouragement, and strong consolation. It is true, you can never think too humbly of yourselves. You are as sinful as you can possibly suppose yourselves to be: your righteousness is as insufficient and imperfect, and you are as undeserving of the favour of God, as you can possibly imagine. But it is not to yourselves that you look for a righteousness, which will bear you out at the bar of your Judge: you have been obliged to give up that point forever: you tried to stand upon your own footing as long as you could, but you found it would not do. And now your only refuge is the righteousness of Christ by faith: here you rest, and you look for salvation in

no other way. My brethren, I would fain do honour to this righteousness; but, alas! the highest thing I can say of it is quite too low. It is indeed a righteousness sufficient for all the purposes for which you want it; it is a sure, a tried foundation. Thousands have built their hopes upon it, and it has never failed one of them yet: you may make the experiment with the same safety. There is not a charge which the law or justice, your own conscience, or Satan, the accuser of the brethren, can bring against you, but what it can fully answer. Here then is safe footing, and let nothing drive you from it: and O, give glory to God for so great a blessing!

Sermon 57.

THE SUCCESS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL, OWING TO A DIVINE INFLUENCE.*

1 COR. III. 7.—*So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase.*

THE design of God in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, is to advance and secure the glory of his own name; and therefore, though he makes use of secondary causes as the instruments of his operations, yet their efficacy depends upon his superintending influence. It is his hand that sustains the great chain of causes and effects, and his agency pervades and animates the worlds of nature and of grace.

In the natural world, he makes use of the instrumentality of the husbandman to till the ground, to sow the seed, and water it. But it is he that commands the clouds to drop down fatness upon it, and the sun to diffuse its vital influence. It is he that continues to the earth, and the other principles of vegetation, their respective virtues; and without this influence of his the husbandman's planting and watering would be in vain; and, after all his labour, he must acknowledge, that *it is God that giveth the increase.*

So, in the world of grace, God uses a variety of suitable means to form degenerate sinners into his image, and fit them for a happy eternity. All the institutions of the gospel are intended for this purpose, and particularly the ministry of it. Ministers are sowers sent out into the wild field of the world, with the precious

* Dated Hanover, November 19, 1752.

seed of the word. It is the grand business of their life to cultivate this barren soil, to plant trees of righteousness, and water them that they may bring forth the fruits of holiness. It is by the use of painful industry, that they can expect to improve this wilderness into a fruitful field; and the Lord is pleased to pour out his Spirit from on high, at times, to render their labours successful; so that they who *went forth bearing precious seed* with sorrow and tears, return, *bringing their sheaves with joy.* But alas, they meet with disappointments enough to convince them that all their labours will be in vain, if a sovereign God deny the influences of his grace. The agency of his holy Spirit is as necessary to fructify the word, and make it the seed of conversion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth and promote vegetation. A zealous Paul may plant the word, and an eloquent Apollos may water it; one may attempt to convert sinners to christianity, and the other to build them up in faith. but they are both nothing, as to the success of their labours, unless God gives the increase; that is, unless he affords the influence of his grace to render their attempts successful in begetting and cherishing living religion in the hearts of men. This is the great truth contained in my text: *Neither is he that planteth, any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

The Corinthians had been blest with the labours of several ministers, particularly of the apostle Paul, who had been the happy instrument of turning them from their native heathenism, and planting the gospel among them, and of Apollos, who succeeded him, and watered the good seed he had planted among them. But the Corinthians, instead of peaceably and thankfully improving the different gifts of different ministers for their spiritual and everlasting benefit, fell into factions, through a partial admiration of the one, in opposition to the other. Some of them were for Paul, as an universal scholar, and a strong reasoner; others were all for Apollos, as an accomplished orator. And thus they considered these ministers of Christ, rather as the ringleaders of factions, than as unanimous promoters of the same catholic christianity. To suppress this party spirit, the apostle asks them, *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos?* "What mighty beings would you make us in your idolatrous attachment to us? Alas! what are we more than feeble ministers of Christ, by whom ye believed? We were not the authors of your faith, but the humble instruments of it in the divine hand; and the success that either of us have

had has not been from our own power, but just as God hath been pleased to give to every man, (verse 5.) I first planted the gospel among you ; Apollos afterwards watered it : this was all we could do : but we could not make it bear the fruits of holiness in one soul. It was God alone that gave the increase, and made our respective labours successful, (ver. 6.) Therefore turn your regard to him alone :—*Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ?* Isai. ii. 22. Do not idolatrously share the honour of your conversion between God the efficient, and us, the humble instruments of it ; but ascribe it to him alone : for *neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth ; but God that gave the increase ;* he is all in all."

When we see a people enjoy the frequent cultivations of the gospel, and the means of spiritual fruitfulness, and yet few new trees of righteousness planted, and those, that have been planted, seemingly withering and unfruitful, we cannot but conclude that something is wanting ; without which all the means they enjoy will be of no service. We should naturally turn our thoughts to an inquiry, what was wanting, had we tilled our lands from year to year without a crop. And since we find at present, that notwithstanding all the labours bestowed upon us, we lie in a deep sleep, and hardly know what it is of late to be animated with the news of some careless sinner here and there awakened to serious concern about his eternal state, it is high time to inquire what is wanting ? There is certainly something wanting, which is of greater consequence than any thing we have. Here are the gospel, and its ordinances, which at times have done great things ; and sinners have yielded to their resistless energy : here is a minister, who, however weak, has sometimes been the happy instrument of giving a sinner an alarm, and speaking a word in season to those that were weary : here are hearers that crowd our sanctuary : hearers of the same kind with those whom we have seen ere now fall under the power of the word. And what then is wanting ? Why, God, that alone can give the increase, is not here by the influences of his grace ; and in his absence, *neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth ;* they are all nothing together ; and may labour till dooms-day, and never convert one soul. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah ?* Where is he that can do more execution with one feeble sentence, than we can with a thousand of our most powerful sermons ! Why, he hath hid his face ; and hence *there is none that calleth upon his name,*

that stirreth up himself to take hold of him. Isai. lxiv. 7. And till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, nothing but briars and thorns will come up among us. Chap. xxxii. 13, 15.

Let your thoughts, therefore, with eager attention now pursue me, while I am proving, illustrating, and making remarks pertinent to our case, from this affecting truth contained in the text, That the success of the ministry of the gospel with respect to saints and sinners, entirely depends upon the concurring influences of divine grace; or, that, without the divine agency to render the gospel successful, all the labours of its ministers will be in vain.

This truth can give us no surprise as a new discovery, if we have any acquaintance with the present degeneracy of human nature—with the declarations and promises of the word of God—with the accounts of the different success of the means of grace in various periods of the church—or with matters that might have come within the compass of our own experience and observation.

I. Such is the present degeneracy of human nature, that all the ministrations of the gospel cannot remedy it, without the concurring efficacy of divine grace.

So barren is the soil, that the seed of the word falls upon it and dies, and never grows up; as though it had never been sown there, till it be fructified by divine grace. It is a soil fruitful of briars and thorns, which grow up, and choke the word; so that it becometh unfruitful till divine grace root them up. Or it may be represented by a rocky or stony soil, where the word of God can take no deep root, and therefore withers, till it be mollified by influences from heaven. Thus our Lord represents the matter in the famous parable of the sower. Matt. xiii. 3, &c. 18, &c.

The metaphors used in sacred scripture to illustrate this case, sufficiently prove the degeneracy of mankind, and their entire opposition to the gospel. They are represented as spiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. John v. 25, that is, though they are still capable of the exercises of reason and animal actions, yet they are really destitute of a supernatural principle of spiritual life, and incapable of suitable exercises towards God. And can a Paul or an Apollos quicken the dead with convictive arguments, with strong persuasions, or tender and passionate expostulations? No; none but he can do it whose almighty voice bade Lazarus come forth. Sinners are also represented as blind, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Now what can feeble mortals do to such ? We can exhibit divine things before them ; we can expose the horrid deformity of sin, and its tremendous consequences ; we can display the glories of God, the beauty of holiness, and the allurements of redeeming love ; but, alas ! all this is but like exposing colours to the blind. We cannot open their eyes ; we cannot communicate such views of things to their minds as are in any measure adequate to the things themselves. What can tender arguments avail to break hearts of stone ? What signifies reasoning to govern headstrong obstinacy, which regards it no more than a whirlwind ? What can persuasions do to extirpate inveterate, implacable enmity ? Rom. viii. 7. What can the charms of eloquence do to charm deaf adders that stop their ears ? Psalm lviii. 4. The Israelites might as well pretend to overthrow the walls of Jericho with the sound of rams' horns, as we with our feeble breath to overthrow the strong holds of Satan in the hearts of sinners ! It is the divine agency alone that gives the success in both cases. Clay cannot open the eyes of the blind, except in his almighty hands, who could form a world out of nothing, and who can work without or against means as easily as with them.

The scripture representations of the degeneracy of mankind are confirmed by universal experience. If we form any observations of ourselves or others, we find that the whole bent of our souls by nature is contrary to the gospel. The gospel is designed to reclaim men from sin ; but they are obstinately set upon it ; it is designed to make sin bitter to them, and to dissolve their hearts into tender sorrows for it ; but we naturally delight in sin, and our hearts are hard as the nether mill-stone : it is intended to bring apostate rebels back to God, and the universal practice of holiness ; but we love estrangement from him, and have no inclination to return. We abhor the ways of strict holiness, and choose to walk in the imaginations of our own hearts. The gospel is calculated to advance the divine glory, and abash the pride of all flesh, in the scheme of salvation it reveals ; but this is directly contrary to the disposition of the sinner, who is all for his own glory. This requires no tedious arguments to prove it. Look in upon your own hearts ; look back on your own conduct ; look round you on the world ; and there the evidences of it will glare upon you.

Now, since the innate dispositions of men are thus averse to the gospel, it is evident that nothing but divine power can make

it effectual for their sanctification. Instructions may furnish the head with notions, and correct speculative mistakes; but they have no power to sway the will, and sweetly allure it to holiness. Persuasions may bring men to practise what they had omitted through mistake, carelessness, or a transient dislike: but they will have no effect where the heart is full of innate enmity against the things recommended. In this case, he that planteth, and he that watereth, is nothing; it is God alone can give the increase; as is more than intimated by,

II. The promises and declarations of the word, which appropriate all the success of the gospel to God alone.

Jehovah is not fond of ostentation and parade, nor wasteful in throwing away his blessings where they are not needed; and therefore if the means of grace were sufficient of themselves to convert sinners and edify believers, he would not make such magnificent promises of the supernatural aids of his grace, nor claim the efficacy of them as his own. He would not assert the insufficiency of them without his influence, nor assign the withdrawment of his grace as one cause of their unsuccessfulness. But all this he does in his word.

Notwithstanding all the miraculous as well as ordinary means of grace which the Israelites enjoyed, there was need of this divine promise, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.* Deut. xxx. 6. And this promise was not peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation of the covenant of grace, which was less clear and efficacious; but we find that one superior excellency of the gospel dispensation is, that it is more abundant in such promises. It is to the gospel church that this promise is more particularly made; *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, &c. not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, &c.—but this is the covenant which I shall make with them; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. Heb. viii. 8, &c.

This is a promise of so much importance, that it is frequently repeated with some circumstantial alteration, as the very life of the New Testament church. *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Eze-

kiel echoes back the same language by the inspiration of the same Spirit, *I will give them one heart ; and I will put a new spirit within them ; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh ; and I will give them an heart of flesh ; and they shall walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.* Ezek. xi. 19, 20. See also chap. xxxvi. 26, 27.

What was the success of St. Peter's sermon (Acts ii.) in the conversion of 3000, but the accomplishment of those promises in Joel and Zachariah ?—*I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.* (Joel ii. 28, 29.) *I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look*, &c. Zach. xii. 10. These promises were substantially renewed by Christ, to encourage the drooping apostles, John xvi. 8, 9, 10. *I will send the Spirit ; and when he is come, he will convince the world*, &c. All their miraculous powers were not sufficient for the conviction of mankind, without the agency of the divine Spirit ; but by this, that promise of the Father to his Son was accomplished : *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Psalm cx. 3.

I might subjoin many other promises of the same kind ; but these are sufficient to shew the absolute necessity of divine influence, or the utter insufficiency of the best means without it. And what farther time might be allotted to this particular, I shall lay out upon this pertinent and useful remark, which, if rightly attended to, would rectify mistakes, and remove many scruples and controversies upon this point. The remark is this, That the promises of God to bestow blessings upon us, do not render needless our most vigorous endeavours to obtain them ; and, on the other hand, that our most vigorous endeavours do not supersede the influences of the Spirit to work in us the dispositions we are labouring after : or, That *that* may be consistently enjoined upon us as a duty, which is promised by God free favour ; and *vice versa.* This may be illustrated by various instances. God commands us as strictly to circumcise the foreskins of our hearts, to make ourselves new hearts and new spirits, (Jer. iv. 4.) and to cleanse ourselves from moral pollution, (Isa. i. 16.) as if this were wholly our work, and he had no efficiency in it. In the mean time, he promises as absolutely to circumcise our hearts to love him, to give us new hearts, and to purge us from all our filthiness, and from all our abominations, as though he performed all the work without our using means.—Now we are sure these things are con-

sistent ; for the sacred oracles are not a heap of contradictions. And how does their consistency appear ? Why, thus : it is our duty to use the most vigorous endeavours to obtain these graces promised, because it is only in the use of vigorous endeavours that we have reason to expect divine influences. And yet these endeavours of ours do not in the least work those graces in us, and therefore there is certainly as much need of the promised agency of divine grace to effect the work, as if we should do nothing at all. Our utmost endeavours fall entirely short of it, and do not entitle us to divine assistance ; and this we must have an humble sense of, before we can receive the accomplishment of such promises as the effect of free grace alone. But we should continue in these endeavours, because we have no reason to hope for the accomplishment of the promises in a course of sloth and negligence. This point may be illustrated by the consistency of the use of means and the agency of providence in the natural world. God has peremptorily promised, *that while the earth remaineth seed-time and harvest shall not cease*, Gen. viii. 22. But this promise does not render it needless for us to cultivate the earth ; nor does all our cultivation render this promise needless : for all our labour would be in vain without the influence of divine providence : and this influence is to be expected only in the use of labour. Thus, in the moral world, the efficacy belongs to God, as much as if we made no use of means at all ; and the most vigorous endeavours are as much our duty, as if we could effect the work ourselves, and he had no special hand in it. Were this remark attended to, it would guard us against the pernicious extremes of turning the grace of God into wantonness, and pleading it as an excuse for our idleness ; and of self-righteousness, and depending upon our own endeavours. In this guarded manner does St. Paul handle this point : *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* Phil ii. 12, 13. But to return : As we may infer the necessity of divine influences from the promises of God, so

We may infer the same thing from the many passages of sacred writ ascribing the success of the gospel upon sinners, and even upon believers, to the agency of divine grace. If even a well-disposed Lydia gives a believing attention to the things spoken by St. Paul, it is *because the Lord hath opened her heart.* Acts xvi. 14. Thus the Philippians believed, because, says the apostle, to you it is given on the behalf of Christ to believe, Phil.

i. 29. Thus the Ephesians were spiritually alive, because, says he, *you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Eph. ii. 1. Faith is not of ourselves ; but is expressly said to be the gift of God. Eph. ii. 8. Nay the implantation of faith is represented as an exploit of omnipotence, like that of the resurrection of Christ. Hence the apostle prays, Eph. i. 19, 20, that the Ephesians might be made deeply sensible of the *exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.* Repentance is also the gift of God : Christ is exalted to bestow it. Acts v. 31. When the Jewish christians heard of the success of the gospel among the Gentiles, they unanimously ascribed it to God : *then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,* Acts xii. 18. ; and it is upon this encouragement that St. Paul recommends the use of proper means to reclaim the obstinate : *if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,* 2 Tim. ii. 25. Regeneration also, in which faith and repentance, and other graces are implanted, is always ascribed to God. If all things are made new, *all these things are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. If, while others reject Christ some receive him, and so are honoured with the privilege of becoming the sons of God, it is not owing to themselves, but to him. *They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.* John i. 11, 12, 13. He begets such of his own sovereign will by the word of truth, James i. 18. and every good and perfect gift with which they are endowed is not from themselves, but from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, who is the great origin of all moral excellency, as the sun is of light. ver. 17. Hence this change is expressed by such terms as denote the divine agency, and exclude that of the creature ; as a new birth, John iii. 3. *a new creation,* 2 Cor. v. 17. Col. iii. 10. the workmanship of God *created in Christ Jesus,* Eph. ii. 10. a resurrection from the dead, John v. 25. Eph. ii. 1. Col. iii. 1. Now it is the greatest absurdity to speak of a man's begetting or creating himself, or raising himself from the dead. Thus we find that the first implantation of grace in the heart of a sinner is entirely the work of God ; and, lest we should suppose that, when it is once implanted, it can flourish and grow without the influence of heaven, we find that the progress of sanctification in believers is ascribed to God, as well as their first conversion. David was sensible after all his attainments, that he could not run the way of God's command-

ments unless God should enlarge his heart. Ps. cxix. 32. All the hopes of Paul concerning his promising converts at Philippi depended upon his persuasion, that *he that had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Christ.* Phil. i. 6. Nay, it was upon this he placed his own entire dependance. *We are not sufficient of ourselves*, says he, *to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* 2 Cor. iii. 5. If I am faithful, it is "because I have obtained mercy of the Lord to make me so." 1 Cor. vii. 25. *By the grace of God I am what I am; and if I have laboured more abundantly than others, it is not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.* Phil. iv. 13. He was relieved under his despondencies by this answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. This is more than intimated in his prayers for himself and others: for example, *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ!* Heb. xiii. 21. And indeed all the prayers of the saints for the aids of divine grace imply the necessity of them; for they would not pray for superfluities, or for what they already have in a sufficient measure. It is the Spirit that helps our infirmities in prayer, and other exercises of devotion. Rom. viii. 24. and all our preparation for the heavenly state and aspirations after it, are of God. *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* 2 Cor. v. 5. In a word, *it is God that worketh all our works in us*, Isa. xxvi. 12. *it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 13. Now the actual communication of divine influences, implies their necessity. Accordingly we find

The necessity of divine influences is asserted in the plainest terms in scripture. *No man*, says Christ, *can come unto me, except the Father draw him*, John vi. 44. *He that hath heard and learned of the Father, and he only will come to him*, ver. 45.; and this influence is not purchased by our endeavours, but it is the free gift of grace. Hence Christ varies his former declarations into this form; *no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father*, ver. 65; and the agency of divine grace is necessary, not only to draw sinners to Christ at first, but also to make them fruitful afterwards. Hence Christ represents even the apostles as dependant upon him as the branch upon the vine; and tells them plainly, that "without him they can do nothing." John

xv. 4, 5. Through all the stages of the christian life, we depend entirely upon him ; and without his influences, we should wither and die like a blasted flower, however blooming and fruitful we were before. Hence, says God to his people, *in me is thy fruit, found*, Hosea xiv. 8. Since then this is the case, it will follow that when God is pleased to withhold his influences, all the means of grace will be unsuccessful. Accordingly we find,

The unsuccessfulness of the gospel is often resolved into the withholding or withdrawing of the influences of grace, as one cause of it. Thus Moses resolves the obstinacy of the Israelites under all the profusion of wonders that had attended them, into this, as one cause of it : *The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 4. If none believe the report of the gospel, it is because the arm of the Lord is not revealed, Isa liii. 1. " If the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are hidden from the wise and prudent, while they are revealed to babes ; it is because God in his righteous judgment and sovereign pleasure, hides them from the one, and reveals them to the other." Matt. xi. 25, 26. Nay, the evangelist speaks in yet more forcible terms, when speaking of the unbelief of the Jews, who were witnesses of Christ's convictive miracles and discourses ; *therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts*, John xii. 39, 40. and in the same strain St. Paul speaks : *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* Rom. ix. 18, &c. These passages are so opposite to the prevailing divinity of the age, that they are dangerous weapons to meddle with ; and it is well they are the very words of scripture, otherwise we should be charged with blasphemy for mentioning the truth contained in them. We must indeed be cautious that we do not infer from these scriptures any such horrid doctrine as this, that men are compelled to sin, and pushed on to ruin, by a necessitating decree, or the resistless impulse of providence ; or that, though they were disposed to turn to God, they are judicially kept back and hindered by the divine hand. This would be contrary to the whole current of scripture, which charges the sin and ruin of sinners upon themselves ; but these passages mean, that God denies to obstinate sinners those influences of his grace which are necessary to convert them, and which, if communicated, would have subdued their utmost obsti-

nacy ; and that in consequence of this denial, they will rush on in sin and irreclaimable impenitence, and perish ; but yet that God, in denying them his grace, does not act merely as an arbitrary sovereign, but as a just judge, punishing them for their sin in abusing the blessings he has bestowed upon them, by judicially withdrawing the aids of his grace, and withholding farther influences. And sure he may punish obstinate sinners with privative as well as positive punishment ; he may as justly withhold or withdraw forfeited blessings, as inflict positive misery. This we all own he may do with respect to temporal blessings ; he may justly deny them to such as have forfeited them ; and why he may not exercise the same sovereignty and justice with regard to spiritual blessings, is hard to say. His hardening the heart, blinding the eyes, &c. of sinners, signify his withdrawing the influences of grace which they have abused, his withholding those additional influences which might irresistibly subdue their obstinacy, and his suffering them to fall into circumstances of temptation. These passages do but strongly and emphatically express thus much : thus much they may mean, without casting any injurious reflections upon God ; and less than this they cannot mean, unless we would explain away their meaning.

From the whole then, we find that the doctrine of the reality and necessity of divine influences to render the administrations of the gospel effectual for saving purposes, is a doctrine familiar to the sacred oracles. This will receive additional confirmation, if we find it agreeable to matter of fact : which leads me to observe,

III. That the different success of the same means of grace in different periods of the church, sufficiently shews the necessity of gracious assistances to render them efficacious. The various states of the church in various ages are but comments upon the sacred pages, and accomplishments of scripture.

Now we find that religion has flourished or declined, not so much according to external means, as according to the degree of divine influence. Alas ! what could Noah, that zealous preacher of righteousness do, during the 120 years of his ministry ? He might warn, he might persuade, he might weep over a secure world in vain : they would rush upon destruction before his eyes ; and he could only persuade his own family ; and even among them there was a cursed Ham. How little could Moses, the favourite messenger and intimate of God, prevail to make his people dutiful ? Alas ! after all the astonishing wonders he wrought before

their eyes, they continued obstinate and rebellious ; *for the Lord had not given them an heart to understand, &c.* Deut. xxix. 4. This Moses mentions, as what was beyond his power, and could be effected by omnipotence only. What inconsiderable success had that zealous prophet Elijah, the eloquent Isaiah, or that tender-hearted, mourning, weeping prophet Jeremiah ? Surely, many feeble servants of Christ, in all respects inferior to them, have been crowned with more extensive success ! Nay, when the Son of God descended from heaven, a teacher to the world, who spake as never man spake, who carried omnipotence along with him to attest his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles, how few, during his life, were brought seriously to regard his doctrine ? He was pleased to defer the remarkable effusion of his Spirit till his return to his native heaven. And when it was poured out, what a glorious alteration followed ! then Peter, a poor fisherman, is the happy instrument of converting three thousand with one short sermon ; which is more perhaps than his divine Master had done by a hundred. Then, in spite of the united opposition of earth and hell, the humble doctrines of the cross triumphed over the nations, and subdued millions to the obedience of faith. Then the doctrines of Jesus, who was crucified at Jerusalem like an infamous malefactor, between two thieves, became the mighty, all-conquering weapons, through God, to demolish the strong holds of Satan. 2 Cor. ii. 4. And whence this strange alteration ? It was from the more abundant effusion of the Spirit upon the minds of men ; upon their minds, I say, for, as to the external evidences from miracles, prophecies, &c. they were sufficiently clear before this happy season. But there was not the same degree of internal illumination by the Spirit. It is often intimated by Christ, in his last discourses with his disciples, that the holy Spirit was not yet given ; and hence it was that he and they laboured so much in vain. But upon his ascension, he performed the promise he had so often repeated, and sent the spirit both upon them and their hearers ; and then the aspect of affairs was happily altered : then the word had free course, and was glorified. Then the world was *convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*

This point might be illustrated farther, by a history of the various periods of the church, from the apostolic age to the present time ; but it would be too tedious ; and what has been offered is sufficient to convince us that it is not by power, nor by might,

but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, that the interests of religion are carried on. Zech. iv. 6. Especially if we add,

IV. Our own experience and observation, which furnish us with many instances in which this great truth has been exemplified.

Our observation furnishes us with such instances as these: Sometimes a minister, who is an universal scholar, a masterly reasoner, and an accomplished orator, and withal, sincerely engaged for the conversion of sinners, labours in vain, and all his excellent discourses seem to have no effect; while another of much inferior accomplishments, is the successful instrument of turning many to righteousness. This cannot be accounted for, without ascribing the distinction to the peculiar concurrence of divine grace; for if it depended upon the instruments, it would be quite the reverse. Sometimes a clear convictive, and withal, solemn and warm discourse, has no effect; while, at another time, the same doctrines, delivered in a weak, incoherent manner, have strange efficacy, and reach the heart. Sometimes the reading of a sermon has been the means of awakening careless sinners, when, at other times, the most solemn and argumentative preaching has been in vain. Sometimes we have seen a number of sinners thoroughly awakened, and brought to seek the Lord in earnest; while another number, under the very same sermon, and who seemed as open to conviction as the former, or perhaps more so, have remained secure and thoughtless, as usual. And whence could this difference arise, but from special grace? We have seen persons struck to the heart with those doctrines which they had heard an hundred times without any effect. And indeed there is something in the manner of persons being affected with the word, which shews that the impression is not made by the word itself, or by any other power than divine. The truths that make such deep impressions upon their hearts, are no new discoveries; they are the old common repeated truths of the gospel, which they had heard before a thousand times; and the manner in which they are represented by the minister, may not be clearer than usual. But, to their surprise, these familiar doctrines flash upon them as new discoveries; they appear to them in a quite different light, as though they had never heard them before: and they reach the conscience, and pierce the heart with such amazing energy, that the sinner is cast into a consternation at his own stupidity, that he

never had such apprehensions of things before. He was wont to regard the word as a speculation, or a pleasing song, but now he finds it living and powerful, &c.; the secrets of his heart are laid open by it, and he is obliged to own that God is with it of a truth. Thus a believer also discerns the doctrines of the gospel in a quite different light at one time than at another: he sees new glories in them. Hence one sermon leaves him cold and hard-hearted, while another, no better in itself, sets him all on fire. Hence also, one receives advantage from a discourse, which had no effect upon another: and from this proceeds the difference in judgment about the excellency of sermons, which we may observe among christians. Every one forms a judgment according to his own sensations, and not according to the discourse in itself. And indeed when we hear an exercised christian expatiate in praise of a discourse, it is a happy sign that it was made of special service to him.

Many such instances as these familiarly occur in the sphere of our observation; which prove, by matters of fact, that the success of the gospel depends upon the influence of divine grace. But we need not look about us to observe others. Turn your eyes inward upon what has passed in your own minds, and you shall find, that

Your own experience proves the same thing.—Have you not found that the very same things have very different effects upon you at different times? Those truths, which at one time leave you dull and sleepy, at other times quicken all your powers to the most vigorous exercise? Sinners, do you not return from the house of God in very different frames, though the service there has been substantially the same? At one time you sweat and agonize under a sense of guilt, and make many resolutions to change your course of life; and at another time, there is a stupid calm within, and you matter not all the concerns of eternity. Some indeed have lain so long under the rays of the Sun of righteousness, that they are hardened like clay, and hardly susceptive of any deep impressions at any time, after they have murdered their conscience, and silenced all its first remonstrances. These may go on serene and placid, till the flames of hell give them sensation; and this is most likely to be their doom; though it is not impossible but that this gospel, this stale, neglected gospel, which now makes no impression on their stony hearts, may yet be endowed with almighty power to break them into the ten-

derest contrition : and I pray God this may be the happy event. I pray God, O sinner, that thou mayest yet fall under the resistless energy of those important things which now appear but trifles to thee. But till persons are thus become proof against the gospel, they generally feel a variety of dispositions under the ministry of it ; and this variety is to be principally ascribed to the various degrees of divine influence upon them at different seasons. And you, saints, you also experience a like vicissitude. Sometimes, O how divinely sweet, O how nourishing is the sincere milk of the word ! How does the word enlighten, quicken, and comfort you ! How exactly it suits your very case ! At other times it is tasteless ; it is a dead letter, and has no effect upon you. At times a sentence seems almighty, and carries all before it ; and you feel it to be the word of God ; at other times, you perceive only your feeble fellow mortal speaking to you, and all his words are but feeble breath ; as different from the former as chaff from wheat. See Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Your own memories can supply my deficiency under this head, by recollecting such instances as these perhaps during your whole life ; and the time urges me to make some remarks upon what has been said. These are so numerous and copious, that though I had them principally in view, and chose this subject for the sake of them, yet I can but superficially touch upon them.

Hence we learn,

1. How essential and important the doctrine of divine influence is to the church of God. The very life, and the whole success of the gospel depend upon it. And since this necessarily supposes the utter depravity and spiritual impotence of human nature in its fallen state, that doctrine also must be frequently and plainly inculcated.

Alas ! the great defect of the system of divinity too fashionable in our days, and one great cause of the languishing state of religion in our age, and of the prevalency of vice and impiety ! Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do something very considerable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the fashion to press a reformation of men's lives, without inculcating the absolute necessity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly such a thing as a thorough reformation to be seen ; but mankind are evidently growing worse and worse. Since men think they can do something, and scorn to be wholly dependant on divine grace, the Lord, as it

were, looks on and suffers them to make the experiment ; and, alas ! it is likely to be a costly experiment to multitudes. God withholds his influence in just displeasure, and lets them try what mighty things the boasted powers of degenerate nature can do without it ; and hence, alas ! they lie all secure and asleep in sin together. Sermons are preached ; the house of God is frequented ; the ordinances of the gospel administered ; yet vice is triumphant ; carnal security almost universal ; and so few are earnestly seeking after religion, that one would hardly suspect, from the success, that these are intended as means to bring them to this. Thus, alas ! it is around us if we believe our senses : and thus it will continue to be, till ministers and people are brought to the dust before God, to acknowledge their own weakness, and entire dependance upon him.—Therefore, hence we learn,

2. That when we enjoy the ministrations of the gospel in the greatest purity and plenty, we should not place our trust upon them, but wholly depend on the influence of divine grace for the success. We are apt to think, if we had but such a minister among us, how much good would be done ! It is true, that faithful and accomplished ministers are singular blessings to the places where they labour, because it is by their instrumentality that the Lord is wont to work : but still let us remember, that even a Paul or an Apollos is nothing, unless the Lord give the increase. One text of scripture, one sentence will do more execution, when enforced by divine energy, than all the labours of the ablest ministers upon earth without it. For this divine energy therefore let us look ; for this let us cry, *cursed be the man that trusteth in man, &c.* When we depend upon the instruments, we provoke the Spirit of God to leave us. If we are fond of taking ministers in his stead, we shall make the trial, till they and we wither away for want of divine influences. This provokes the blessed Spirit to blast the gifts of his ministers, to suffer them to fall, or to remove them out of the way, when they are set up as his rivals, that their idolaters may see they are but men. This provokes him to leave the hearers fruitless under the best cultivations, till experience sadly convinces them that they can do nothing without him. Therefore let not ministers trust in their own abilities, nor people in their labours ; but all in the Lord.

That we should ascribe all the success of the gospel to God alone, and not sacrilegiously divide the honour of it between him and

the instruments of it, or between him and ourselves, the ministers of Christ are ready to answer you, in the language of Peter, If we be examined of the good deed done to impotent sinners, by what means they are made whole ; be it known unto you, that by the name of Jesus do they stand whole before you. Acts iv. 9, 10. Why do ye look so earnestly upon us, as if by our own power or holiness we had done this ! chap. iii. 12. It is a very shocking compliment to them to be accounted the authors of your faith. Good ministers love to be humble, to lie in their proper sphere, and would have God to have all the glory, as the great efficient ; and when we ascribe the work of God to the instrument, we provoke him to withdraw his influence, that we may be convinced of the mistake. Let us also take care that we do not assume the honour of the work to ourselves. Alas ! we had no hand in it, but opposed it with all our might ; and therefore, *not unto us*, &c. Ps. cxv. 1. The Lord hath done great things for us in this place, for which we are glad. One can name one, and another another, as his spiritual father, or the helper of his faith : but still remember, these only planted or watered ; but it was God that gave the increase : and therefore to him alone ascribe his own work.

3. Hence also we may learn, whither we should look for grace to render the gospel successful among us. Let us look up to God. Saints, apply to him for his influences to quicken your graces, and animate you in your christian course. Sinners, cry to him for his grace to renew your nature and sanctify you. Not all the men, nor all the means upon earth, can be of any service to you without him. Carefully attend upon the gospel, and all its institutions ; but still be sensible, that these alone will not do : more is necessary ; even the supernatural agency of divine grace.

How dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Spirit, and cause him to withdraw ! In that cursed moment when a sinner has quenched the Spirit, all the means of grace become useless to him. Our salvation depends entirely upon the divine agency ; and therefore to forfeit this, is to cut ourselves off from all hope. Let us then indulge every good motion, entertain every solemn thought, cherish every pious resolution, and so, as it were, invite the blessed agent to accomplish his work, instead of provoking him to leave us. Alas ! how natural is it for mankind to resist him ! how averse are they to indulge his motions, and submit to his operations ! And are not some of you guilty in this respect ?

4. We observe that whatever excellent outward means and privileges a church enjoys, it is in a most miserable condition, if the Lord has withdrawn his influences from it: and whether this be not too much our own condition, I leave you to judge Some of you, I doubt not, are even now, when others are withering around you, flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and feel the dews of heaven upon you: such I heartily congratulate. But in general, it is evident that a contagious lukewarmness and carnal security have spread themselves among us. Matters would not be thus still and quiet, if there was any considerable number of sinners among us anxiously seeking after salvation. The violence of their concern would constrain them to unbosom themselves to their minister, and to christians around them. Our public assemblies would not wear so stupid and unconcerned an aspect, were they generally pricked to the heart. And what is the cause of this declension? Why, the Lord denies the increase: the Lord withholds his influence. This complaint is become fashionable among us, and often upon our lips; but pray consider what you say when you utter this complaint. And is the Lord indeed withdrawn from us? Then all is gone; then saints may languish, and sinners may perish: and there is no remedy. We may indeed have preaching, sacraments, societies, &c. but, alas! what will all these avail, if God deny the increase! they will not save one soul; nay, they will but aggravate our condemnation. Let sinners take the alarm, and consider how sad their case is, who have outlived the season of remarkable divine influences! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved; and what do you think will become of you? How poor a chance, if I may so speak, have you for life, when the spirit is thus restrained! You hardly know one careless sinner, in the compass of your knowledge, that has been made seriously religious, within these two or three years. If men were pressing into the kingdom of heaven, you might be helped forward, as it were, in the crowd; but now all lies as a dead weight against you, and is it not time for you to cry mightily to God that he would pour out his Spirit upon you!

Sermon 58.

THE REJECTION OF GOSPEL-LIGHT THE CONDEMNATION OF MEN.

JOHN III. 19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because* [or *for*] *their deeds were evil.*

WHAT a strange, alarming declaration is this! *Light is come into the world:* the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon this region of darkness; therefore it is enlightened; therefore it is bright intellectual day with all its rational inhabitants: therefore they will no longer grope and stumble in darkness, but all find their way into the world of eternal light and glory. These would be natural inferences: this event we would be apt to expect from the entrance of light into the world. But hear and tremble, ye inhabitants of the enlightened parts of the earth! hear and tremble, ye sons of Nassau-Hall, and inhabitants of Princeton! The benevolent Jesus, the Friend of human nature, the Saviour of men, whose lips never dropped an over-severe word, or gave a false alarm: Jesus himself proclaims, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, &c.*

This is the condemnation; that is, this is the great occasion of more aggravated condemnation at the final judgment, and of more severe and terrible punishments in the eternal world; or, this is the cause of men's condemning themselves even now at the bar of their own consciences.

That light is come into the world—Jesus, the Sun of the moral world, is risen, and darts his beams around him in the gospel. And this furnishes guilty minds with materials for self-condemnation; and their obstinate resistance of the light enhances their guilt, and will render their condemnation the more aggravated; and the reason is, that

Men love darkness rather than light. They choose ignorance rather than knowledge! The Sun of righteousness is not agreeable to them, but shines as a baleful, ill-boding luminary. If they

did but love the light, its entrance into the world would be their salvation ; but now it is their condemnation. But why do they hate the light ? Truly, light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to the eyes to see the sun : and no light so sweet as this from heaven : no sun so bright and reviving as the Sun of righteousness : and why then do they not love it ? Alas ! there is no reason for it, but this wretched one,

Because their deeds are evil. And evil deeds always excite uneasiness in the light, and afford the conscience matter of self-accusation, therefore they wrap up themselves in darkness, and avoid the painful discoveries of the light.

The text directs us to the following inquiries :

What is that light which is come into the world ? What is the darkness that is opposed to it ? What are the evidences of men's loving darkness rather than light ? What is the reason of it ? And in what respects the light's coming into the world, and men's loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation ?

I. What is that light which is come into the world ?

The answer to this, and the other questions, I shall endeavour to accommodate to our own times and circumstances, that we may the more readily apply it to ourselves.

The light of reason entered our world as soon as the soul of man was created ; and, though it is greatly obscured by the grand apostasy, yet some sparks of it still remain.

To supply its defects the light of revelation soon darted its beams through the clouds of ignorance, which involved the human mind, on its flying off to so great a distance from the Father of lights. This heavenly day began feebly to dawn upon the first pair of sinners, in that early promise concerning *the seed of the woman :* and it grew brighter and brighter in the successive revelations made to the patriarchs, to Moses, and the prophets, till at length the Messiah appeared, as an illustrious sun after a gradual, tedious twilight of the opening dawn.

The light of human literature has also come into the world, and shines with unusual splendours upon our age and nation ; and lo ! it illuminates this little village, and extends its beams through the land.

But it is not light in any of these senses that our Lord principally intends, but himself and his blessed gospel ; a more clear and divine light than any of the former.

He often represents himself under the strong and agreeable metaphor of light. *I am the light of the world*, says he : *he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.* John viii. 12. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me, should not abide in darkness.* John xii. 46. Light is a strong and beautiful metaphor for knowledge, prosperity, comfort, and happiness ; and these are the rays which the blessed Jesus diffuses around him :—but, wherever he does not shine, all is sullen and dismal darkness. Hell is *the blackness of darkness forever*, because he does not extend to it the light of his countenance. That country where he does not shine, is *the land of darkness and the shadow of death ;* and that heart which is not illuminated with *the light of the knowledge of his glory*, is the gloomy dungeon of infernal spirits ; but wherever he shines, there is intellectual day, the bright meridian of glory and blessedness.

His gospel also is frequently represented as a great light ; and no metaphor was ever used with more emphasis and propriety. It is the medium through which we discover the glory of the Deity, the beauties of holiness, the evil of sin, and the reality and infinite importance of eternal, invisible things. This is the light that reveals the secrets of the heart, and discovers ourselves to ourselves. It is this that gives us a just and full view of our duty to God and man, which is but imperfectly or falsely represented in every other system of religion and morality in the world. It is this that discovers and ascertains a method in which rebels may be reconciled to their offended Sovereign, and exhibits a Saviour in full view to perishing sinners. Hail ! sacred heaven-born light ! welcome to our eyes, thou brightest and fairest effulgence of the divine perfections ! May *this day spring from on high*, visit all the regions of this benighted world, and overwhelm it as with a deluge of celestial light ! Blessed be God, its vital rays have reached to us in these ends of the earth ; and if any of us remain ignorant of the important discoveries it makes, it is *because we love darkness rather than light !* Which leads me to inquire,

II. What is that darkness that is opposed to this heavenly light ?

Darkness is a word of gloomy import ; and there is hardly any thing dismal or destructive, but what is expressed by it in sacred language. But the precise sense of the word in my text,

is, a state of ignorance, and the absense of the means of conviction. *Men love darkness rather than light;* that is, they choose to be ignorant, rather than well-informed: ignorant particularly of such things as will give them uneasiness to know; as their sin, and the danger to which it exposes them They are wilfully ignorant: and hence they hate the means that would alarm them with the mortifying discovery. They would rather be flattered than told the honest truth, and know their own character and condition; and hence they shut their eyes against the light of the gospel, that would flash the painful conviction upon them. Though the light of the gospel shines round you, yet are not some of you involved in this darkness? This you may know by the next inquiry.

III. What are the evidences of men's loving darkness rather than light?

The general evidence, which comprehends all the rest, is their avoiding the means of conviction, and using all the artifices in their power to render them ineffectual.

It is not impossible to characterize such of you as *love darkness rather than light*, though you may be so much upon your guard against the discovery, as not to perceive your own character.

Though you may have a turn for speculation, and perhaps delight in every other branch of knowledge, yet the knowledge of yourselves, the knowledge of disagreeable duties, the discovery of your sin and danger, of your miserable condition as under the condemnation of the divine law, this kind of self-knowledge you carefully shun; and, when it irresistibly flashes upon you, you endeavour to shut up all the avenues of your mind, through which it might break upon you, and you avoid those means of conviction, from which it proceeds.

You set yourselves upon an attempt very preposterous and absurd in a rational being, and that is, Not to think. When the ill-boding surmise rises within, "All is not well: I am not prepared for the eternal world: if I should die in this condition I am undone forever:" I say, when conscience thus whispers your doom, it may make you sad and pensive for a minute or two, but you soon forget it: you designedly labour to cast it out of your thoughts, and to recover your former negligent serenity. The

light of conviction is a painful glare to a guilty eye ; and you wrap up yourselves in darkness, lest it should break in upon you.

When your thoughts are like to fix upon this ungrateful subject, do you not labour to divert them into another channel ? You immerse yourselves in business, you mingle in company, you indulge and cherish a thoughtless levity of mind, you break out of retirement into the wide world, that theatre of folly, trifling, and dissipation ; and all this to scatter the gloom of conviction that hangs over your ill-boding minds, and silence the clamours of an exasperated conscience ! You laugh, or talk, or work, or study away these fits of seriousness ! You endeavour to prejudice yourselves against them by giving them ill names ; as Melancholy, Spleen, and I know not what ; whereas they are indeed the honest struggles of an oppressed conscience to obtain a fair hearing, and give you faithful warning of approaching ruin : they are the benevolent efforts of the Spirit of grace to save a lost soul. And O ! it would be happy for you if you had yielded to them, and cherished the serious hour !

For the same reason also, you love a soft representation of christianity, as an easy, indolent, inactive thing ; requiring no vigorous exertion, and attended with no dubious conflict, but encouraging your hopes of heaven in a course of sloth, carelessness, and indulgence. Those are the favourite sermons and favourite books which flatter you with smooth things, putting the most favourable construction upon your wickedness, and representing the way to heaven as smooth and easy.

Or if you have an unaccountable fondness for faithful and alarming preaching, as it must be owned some self-flatterers have, it is not with a view to apply it to yourselves, but to others. If you love the light, it is not that you may see yourselves, but other objects : and whenever it forces upon you a glance of yourselves, you immediately turn from it, and hate it.

Hatred of the light, perhaps, is the reason why so many among us are so impatient of public worship ; so fond of their own homes on the sacred hours consecrated to divine service ; and so reluctant, so late, or so inconstant in their attendance. It is darkness perhaps, at home ; but the house of God is filled with light, which they do not love.

This also is one reason why the conversation of zealous communicative christians, who are not ashamed to talk of what lies

nearest their hearts, I mean their Religion, their Saviour, and their God, and to express an abhorrence of what they so sincerely hate, I mean the vices of mankind, and every appearance of evil; I say, this is one reason why their conversation is such a heavy burden, such a painful restraint to many. Such men reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the beauties of holiness all around them :—they carry light with them whithersoever they go, and strike conviction to the guilty. The strictness, the warm devotion and spirituality of their lives, pass a sentence of condemnation upon sinners; a sentence which they cannot but feel, and which therefore renders them uneasy. Hence it is that such lively and circumspect christians are not at all popular in the world; but the favourites of the world are your pliable, temporizing, complaisant christians, that never carry their religion with them into polite company, but conform themselves to the taste of those they converse with. These give no man's conscience uneasiness, they reflect no heavenly light, but thicken the darkness of every company in which they appear; therefore they are acceptable to the lovers of darkness.

Another expedient that has often been used, and which some of you perhaps have attempted, to avoid the light, is, to endeavour to work up yourselves to a disbelief of the christian revelation. If you could banish that heavenly light out of the world, or substitute darkness in its place, then you might perpetrate the works of darkness with more confidence and licentiousness. Therefore you eagerly listen to the laughs, the jeers, the railleries and sophisms of loose wits against it; and you are afraid to give a fair hearing to the many satisfactory evidences in its favour. Thus you cherish that hideous monster, Infidelity; your own offspring, not Satan's, though the father of lies; for he *believes and trembles*. James ii. 19.

These artifices and the like, are the effects, and consequently the evidences and indications of men's loving darkness rather than light. And instead of a larger illustration, I shall conclude this head with a plain honest appeal to my hearers.

As in the presence of the heart-searching God, I solemnly appeal to your consciences, whether you do not deal partially with yourselves, and refuse pursuing those hints of your dangerous condition, till you make a full discovery? Do not your hearts smite you, because you have suppressed evidence, when it was

against you, and shut your eyes against conviction? When the glass of the divine law has been held up before you, and shewn you your own hideous image, have you not gone away, and soon *forgot what manner of men you were?* Do you not know in your consciences, that the hopes you entertain of future happiness are not the result of severe repeated trial, but on the other hand, owe their strength and even their being to a superficial examination, or none at all, to blind self-flattery and excessive self-love, which tempt you to believe things as you would have them? Is it censoriousness, or is it evidence and faithfulness, that constrains me to cry out, O! how rare are well-grounded, well attested hopes among us? Hopes that have not been slightly entertained, nor retained without good evidence, after impartial repeated trials; hopes that have risen and fallen, gathered strength or languished, been embraced or abandoned, perhaps a thousand times, according to the various degrees of evidence; and after a series of such vicissitudes, attended with a variety of correspondent passions, of joys and fears, of discouraging anxieties and transporting prospects, have at length arrived at a settled, confirmed state, supported by that only sufficient proof, conspicuous holiness of heart and life. For the decision of this important doubt, I appeal from my own judgment, from the judgment of a censorious spirit and a blind charity, from every judgment but that of your own hearts: at that tribunal I lodge the appeal; and there I insist the matter should be tried. And remember this, *if your hearts condemn you*, much more does God, the Supreme Judge: for *he is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things*; knoweth many causes of condemnation, unknown and perhaps unsuspected by you. But, *brethren, if your hearts condemn you not, then you have confidence towards God.* 1 John iii. 20, 21. I proceed to inquire,

IV. What is the reason of this absurd preference, that *men love darkness rather than light?*

The melancholy reason of this is easily discovered, and has been partly anticipated; and it is this, that men love ease and security of mind, rather than fear and anxiety. They are really obnoxious sinners, under the terrible displeasure of almighty God, and on the slippery brink of everlasting destruction. Now to have a full conviction of this would alarm their fears, imbitter their pleasures, damp their eager pursuits, and cast their minds into a ferment of anxiety and terror. But to be blind to all these

miserable prospects, to be elated with sanguine expectations of the contrary, to have all serene and calm within, to be charmed with all the fine chimeras of a flattering imagination; to be fearless of danger, and pleased with themselves; this is a state they naturally delight in: in this state they will lull themselves asleep at all adventures, regardless of the consequence; and as darkness is the most proper attendant of sleep, therefore they choose it. But the light of the gospel let into the conscience would give them quite another view of things, would overturn all their towering hopes, and set the terrors of the Lord in array against them; would open such shocking prospects in the ways of sin, that they could no longer dare to walk in them; would constrain them to indulge the sorrows of a broken heart, and to long, and pant, and look, and cry for a Saviour. This would be a very painful exercise to them; and therefore they hate and shun the light, which would force the unwelcome conviction upon them.

This is the reason which Christ himself assigns for some men's loving darkness rather than light. *Every one that doth the truth cometh unto the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* Such a one is willing to be searched: the presumption is in his favour, and the trial will turn out to his honour. *But he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his evil deeds should be reproved.* John iii. 20, 21. It is the fear of this reproof that makes him afraid of the light; for he cannot but be conscious that his evil deeds deserve it: and to be thus reproved will yield him pain.

"But since they have such favourable thoughts of themselves, and entertain such high hopes, why are they afraid of the light? must they not rather presume its discoveries will be in their favour? And if so, why do they hate it?" I answer, that, notwithstanding all their high sentiments of themselves, they have often a secret suspicion they are not well grounded, and that the light would make some terrible discoveries concerning them; and hence they will not venture to trust themselves in the light, lest their secret suspicion should be confirmed, and rise into a full conviction. It is really so evident that they are guilty, unholy creatures, unfit for heaven, and their consciences sometimes give them such hints of this alarming secret, that they cannot keep themselves altogether ignorant of it. They therefore try to evade the trial, lest the sentence should go against them. I appeal to

your own breasts, my brethren, whether this be not the true reason why you are so unwilling to examine yourselves, and submit to the severe scrutiny of the light of revelation? why you are averse to self-knowledge, and the means that would obtrude it upon you? Is it not because you cannot but pre-judge the matter even against yourselves, in spite of all the arts of self-flattery? And if there are such strong presumptions against you, that even yourselves cannot but dread a trial at the tribunal of your consciences, is it not evident, that chosen darkness is your only guard against conviction, and that your case is really bad? And if so, how sorry a relief is it to avoid the discovery! since all your preposterous care to avoid it will but aggravate your condemnation! Which naturally introduces the last inquiry:

V. In what respects the light's coming into the world, and men's loving darkness rather than light, is their condemnation.

Here I have only to illustrate two particulars already hinted; that this furnishes them with matter for self-condemnation now, and will be the occasion of their more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world.

I. This furnishes them with matter of self-condemnation in the present state. It is hard, perhaps impossible, for sinners under the meridian light of the gospel, to avoid all conviction of their guilt and danger. That light is very penetrating, and will dart its rays through the thickest glooms of ignorance: *it is vital and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword; piercing and dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Heb. iv. 12. Such of you, my brethren, as are resolved to shun the mortification of self knowledge, live in a situation very unfavourable to your design. You have had "burning and shining lights" among you;* who I doubt not, *shine as the sun, and as the stars in the firmament forever and ever;* but, when they are translated to a higher sphere, the gospel has not left you, but still shines around you; and you will find it very difficult, I hope, impossible, to wrap up yourselves in Egyptian darkness in such a Goshen, such a land of vision. In Tartary or Japan, or some savage region of darkness, you might have lived in contented ignorance, and avoid-

* Mr. Burr and Mr. Edwards, Presidents of the College at Nassau-Hall, before Mr. Davies.

ed those unacceptable glares of light which will now break in upon you, in spite of all your vigilance ; for under the faithful and solemn preaching of the gospel, your consciences will often be disturbed, and you will find yourselves unable to go on in sin bold and intrepid. And though in the thoughtless gaiety of health, and the hurry and din of business, you may drown the clamours of conscience, yet in a retired hour, upon a sick bed, and in the near views of death and eternity, conscience will speak, and constrain you to hear : and thus you will live unhappy, self-condemned creatures in this world, till you are condemned by the righteous sentence of God in the world to come. Therefore consider,

II. Your loving darkness rather than light, will occasion your more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world. It was in your power to receive warning, and discover your danger in time ; nay, it cost you some pains to avoid the discovery, and make light of the warning. And what a fruitful source of self-tormenting reflections will this be ! How will you fret, and vex, and accuse, and condemn yourselves, for acting so foolish a part ! How will you exhaust and spend yourselves in eager, fruitless wishes, that you had admitted conviction while the danger was avoidable ! But, O ! it will then be too late ! Hell is a region of darkness too, but not of that soothing, peaceful darkness of ignorance, which you now prefer to the light of the gospel, but a lowering, tremendous, tormenting darkness, that will forever hide every bright and pleasing prospect from your eyes, and yet be the proper medium for discovering sights of wo and terror : a thick darkness, occasioned by the everlasting eclipse of the Sun of Righteousness and the light of God's countenance, who will never dart one ray of comfort or of hope through the sullen gloom. In this blackness of darkness you must dwell forever, who now love darkness rather than light. And O ! how will your consciences haunt and terrify you, in that cheerless and stormy night ! Your guilt will also appear great in the sight of God, as well as to your own consciences, and therefore he will inflict the greater punishment upon you. You have despised the richest blessings that even infinite goodness could bestow upon the children of men ; I mean, his gospel and his Son : you have made light of his authority in the most open and audacious manner. He knows you were even afraid to discover

your duty towards him ; he knows you would not regard your own consciences when they were his advocates, and that you were unwilling to admit so much conviction as would render you sorry for your offences against him. Nay, he knows that your being convinced that this or that was an offence against Him, was no restraint to you from the commission of it. In short, he knows you spent your lives either in sinning against knowledge, or in avoiding that knowledge which would have prevented your sinning.—And while he views you in this light, what obstinate, wilful, daring offenders must you appear in his eyes ? And what aggravated punishment must he judge your due ! He also knows you reluctated and struggled against your own salvation, and hated that light which would have shewn you the way to everlasting life. And must he not think you worthy of that destruction you have voluntarily chosen, and refuse you admittance to that happiness which you wilfully refused ?

This is the representation which the scriptures uniformly give us of the doom of such as love darkness rather than light. *If I had not come and spoken to them*, says the blessed Jesus, *they would not have had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin.* John xv. 22. *It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon*, though most notorious for all manner of wickedness and debauchery, *than for Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum*, in which Christ's mighty works were done, and the light of his gospel shone so bright. Matt. xi. 21, 24. And this is agreeable to the eternal rules of righteousness, that much should be required where much has been given ; and that the degree of guilt should be estimated by the degrees of obligation and advantages for obedience.

And now, my dear hearers, upon a review of this subject, you see your own circumstances ; the light is come among you ; it shines all around you ; and, I doubt not but at times it finds some openings through which it forces its way even into unwilling minds. You have light to distinguish between truth and error ; between sin and duty ; between the way to heaven, and the way to hell ; you are warned, admonished and instructed ; you have the strongest inducements to a life of religion, and the strongest dissuasives from a course of sin. I leave you therefore to determine what your guilt and punishment must be if you choose darkness rather than light ; light so clear, so reviving, so

salutary, so divine! This alarming subject is very pertinent to us all, and we should all apply it to ourselves; but it is so peculiarly adapted to the residents of this house, that I cannot but direct my address particularly to you, my dear pupils, who are the children of the light in more respects than one.

There is not one in a thousand of the sons of men that enjoys your advantages. Light, human and divine, natural and supernatural, ancient and modern; that is, knowledge of every kind shines upon you, and you are every day basking under its rays. You have nothing to do but to polish your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that unless you admit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine in your hearts, you will still be the children of darkness, and confined in the blackness of darkness forever. This is intolerably shocking, even in supposition. Suppose any of you should be surrounded with more light than others, for no other purpose but that you may have a stronger conflict with conviction, and that your consciences may with greater force raise tumults and insurrections within you; suppose your sins should be the sins of men of learning and knowledge, the most daring and gigantic sins on this side hell: suppose you should turn out sinners of great parts, fine geniuses, like the fallen angels, those vast intellects; wise but wicked; wise to do evil, but without knowledge to do good; suppose it should be your highest character that you can harangue well, that you know a few dead languages, that you have passed through a course of philosophy; but as to that knowledge which sanctifies all the rest, and renders them useful to yourselves or others; that knowledge which alone can make you wise to salvation, and guide you to avoid the paths of destruction, you shun it, you hate it, and choose to remain contentedly ignorant in this important respect; suppose your parents, who have been at the expense of your education; your friends who have entertained such high and pleasing expectations concerning you; church and state, that look to you for help, and depend upon you to fill stations of importance in the world, and your careful instructors, who observe your growing improvements with proportional pleasure;—suppose, that after all this generous labour, and all these pleasing prospects, they should see you at last doomed to everlasting darkness, for your voluntary abuse of the light you now enjoy;—suppose these things,

and——but the consequences of these suppositions are so terrible, that I am not hardy enough to mention them. And, O! shall they ever become matters of fact!

Therefore, my dear youth, admit the light, love it, and pursue it, though at first it should make such discoveries as may be painful to you; for the pain will prove medicinal. By discovering your danger in time, you may be able to escape it; but never expect to remove it by the silly expedient of shutting your eyes. Be impartial inquirers after truth as to yourselves, as well as other things, and no longer attempt to put a cheat upon yourselves. Alas! how childish and foolish, as well as wicked and ruinous, would such an imposture be! The gospel, in this particular, only requires you to be honest men; and surely this is a most moderate and reasonable demand. Therefore, be ye *children of the light and of the day*, and walk as such, and then it will be a blessing to the world and to yourselves, that ever you were born.

Finally, Let us all remember the terror of this friendly warning, *That this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

END OF VOL. II.

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